

SOME ASPECTS OF LINCOLN'S SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC POLICIES

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CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	1-iv
Chapter I : A Nation in Ferment: The Surge for Reform	1-45
Chapter II : Evolution of Lincoln's Thought Towards Slavery and the Negroes	46-91
Chapter III : The Travails of the Emancipator	92-120
Chapter IV : The Indian Policy of the Lincoln Administration	121-150
Chapter V : The President and the Working People	151-173
Chapter VI : Conclusion	174-179
Bibliography	180-185

PREFACE

Abraham Lincoln is regarded not only in his country but virtually all over the world as one of the greatest Presidents that the United States has ever had. He is also widely regarded as one of the great men in history who stood for the defence and extension of human values. Such appraisals may have a certain validity if the test applied were to be exclusively the enormous contribution that he made for the victory of the Union in the Civil War. It is, however, relevant to subject to critical scrutiny the response of Lincoln to the real and significant social and economic issues in his times. Most American writers tend to display a rather curious reluctance to examine critically Lincoln's record in this respect even though they display no such attitude in respect of the period before and the period after his Presidency.

The record of Lincoln and the attitude of his Administration has to be viewed against a background of his times. He was propelled to the Presidency, among other things, on the crest of a wave of sentiment in the North against the inhuman institution of slavery. Perhaps in no other period of American history before or since and including the Progressive Era and the New Deal Era of the twentieth century was there such a widespread exhibition of concern for the eradication of a major social abuse and for making the promise of American life meaningful. President Lincoln led the country into war voicing sentiments couched in highly moral and ethical terms. As President

he gathered into his hands extensive powers and did not hesitate to use them in matters that he deemed important. It will be the task of the present dissertation, to examine critically against the background of the reform impulse of the time and Lincoln's own reported humanitarian impulses, how he responded to certain issues that had considerable contemporary relevance and also implications for the future in respect of the realization of "the promise of American life."

The first chapter in the dissertation has discussed the reform impulse of the decade that culminated in the election of Lincoln to the Presidency. The second chapter has dealt with Lincoln's attitude towards the future of slavery in his country. His views regarding the redressal of the grievances of the Negroes in the country have been critically studied. The implications of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and his proposal for compensated emancipation have been analyzed in the third chapter. The central theme to which he subscribed of encouraging blacks to leave the United States and to allow themselves to be "colonized" elsewhere have been examined in detail.

The fourth chapter has concerned itself with an exposition of Lincoln's views and the policies that he advocated in respect of American Indians. The serious adverse implications that those policies represented for the Indian community have been critically analyzed.

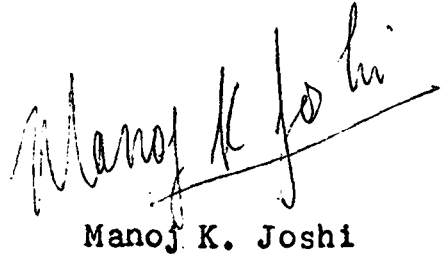
The fifth chapter has examined Lincoln's attitude towards the working man. It is true that Lincoln received considerable praise from working men's organizations in Europe and that he was also, by and large, supported by the working men in his own country. But the effort in this chapter has been to examine what Lincoln's own record shows in regard to measures to ameliorate the conditions of American working men and to safeguard their interests.

The final chapter has been devoted to conclusions arising out of the discussions in the earlier chapters.

In the preparation of the dissertation relevant publications available in the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, American Library and the Indian Council of World Affairs Library have been used. I am grateful to the librarians and staffs of these organizations for their assistance.

The present thesis was written under the supervision of Professor M. S. Venkataramani. It was in this course on "Sectional Conflict and the Civil War" that I gradually became accustomed to the importance of subjecting the personalities and developments of the period to critical scrutiny, paying attention not only to the rhetoric of the parties concerned but their thoughts and actions. Professor Venkataramani was also kind enough to share with me notes and comments on the developments dealt with under the present work. I am grateful to him for his guidance and help without which it would have been difficult

to undertake the present work. A good friend of mine who has quite a passion for anonymity has placed me under a deep debt of gratitude by typing the drafts and the final version of this dissertation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manoj K Joshi". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

31 December 1975

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Chapter I

A NATION IN FERMENT : THE SURGE FOR REFORM

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A NATION IN FERMENT : THE SURGE FOR REFORM

The rise of capitalism in the United States with a large scale productive system and urban organization created a major upheaval in the social fabric of American society. Changes of this type in the society invariably led to dislocations, which, while not striking as historical phenomena in themselves, gave rise to a searching scrutiny of the American system and its values by increasing numbers of Americans.

The period 1830-1860 marks a major transformation in the American economy from a primarily agrarian one to a fast growing industrial entity. In the Eastern seaboard states the growing working class began to articulate its demands. New industrial cities were coming into existence and the population of the older cities was rising rapidly. In the region behind the seaboard, from Maine to Georgia, the number of freehold farmers was increasing, various agitations relating to their problems were making more farmers politically conscious. Immigrants were flooding in from the Old World. These events as, the Beard¹s point out, helped to erode the prevailing class-structures. The result of the changes in the old and the rise of newer forms in every aspect of American society created severe dislocations. The growth of productive forces created new promises. In the

1. Charles A. Beard, Mary R. Beard, and William Beard, The New Basic History of the United States (London, 1960), p. 206.

realm of ideas, this reflected itself in the spirit of perfectionism--the idea that faults in the system could and must be set right and that evils like ignorance, poverty, drunkenness could be banished. The demand was voiced that prisons should be improved and that better care for the handicapped should be ensured. The rights of women were championed. None of these causes, however, evoked such intense passion as the movement against the greatest social evil that disfigured America--Negro slavery.

These reform groups were led by men of exceptional ability and ideas who organized local societies, put out a host of publications, collected funds and sought to organize national and even international conventions. They agitated ceaselessly to arouse public consciousness and to enlist popular support. There was often a duplication of leadership in such groups and sometimes these reformers worked at cross-purposes. There was, however, one basic idea, the foundations of which lay deep in American society--that there were wrongs to right, that they could be righted, and that this process called for the conscious participation of individuals.

The impulse for reform originated in the Old World. The Enlightenment ideas, the throes of the French Revolution, set off the chain-reactions that were to transform European society. They had their impact on the United States too. "On the ideological level", notes Merle Curti, "humanitarianism itself sprang

from the Enlightenment and from Christian ethics. In the fertile ground that a rising industrial and urban society provided, it struck deep roots...[and] no reform movement failed to support its program by appeals to inherent and inalienable rights of man to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness...."² The tremendous expansion of the West, the vast panorama of wealth that opened in America at that period, along with the phenomenal growth in productivity of the society by means of harnessing steam-power gave rise to another important impulse to reform-utilitarianism.

These ideas in themselves were not enough to give either strength or shape to the reform impulse. It was the underlying economic and social dislocation that formed the basis of the movement. Curti notes that while "no clear relationship seems to exist between the period of political revolts and business cycle, much evidence could be mustered to support the thesis that hard times following the panic of 1837 played a part in expanding the interest in social reform."³ "Hard times" led various groups to put forward their own panaceas which, while safeguarding or promoting their own interests were supposed to strengthen American democracy and improve the quality of life for all its people. The agrarian interests argued, for instance,

2 Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1964), p. 360.

3 Ibid., p. 367.

that opening up the West by free grant of homesteads would be good for the country and ease the plight of urban labourers who faced difficulties because of the vagaries of the business cycle.⁴

The incipient working class movement sought to pitch its appeal to the poor farmers who were described as victims of the economic system. There were those who argued that the first order on the agenda of reform in America should be the abolition of the institution of slavery. Conservatives who were opposed to one or other reform proposals sought to characterize them as anti-national, virtually un-American. In the South, when emotional opposition to abolitionism grew intense, advocates of the "peculiar institution" often tended to club all reform as "abolitionism" and thus suspect.

It was easy, even in those days, to condemn utopian socialism, abolitionism and even feminism as "un-American". This, however, did not take into account the vital core of the impulse which lay within the logic of American development. The conservatives both North and South were somewhat fearful of the implications of reform. They felt that it might eventually undermine laissez faire, bring in governmental intervention, and thus threaten "private initiative", which was the basis for their own privileged position in society.

4 See Louis M. Hacker, The American Tradition (New York, 1947), pp. 336-37.

Historians have pointed out the correlation between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism in Europe. The United States was, by religious denomination, primarily Protestant. There were two Protestant denominations which differed significantly in their theology, yet involved themselves in the quest for social reform. These were the "Calvinists", and the "Universalists" like the Unitarians. Orthodox Calvinism had become over the years mellowed in America, increasingly some of its articulate leaders came to place an emphasis on respect for the dignity of the individual, confidence in man's capacity to improve himself and a belief in the idea of progress.

The Unitarians, unlike orthodox Calvinists rejected salvation for a select few for a belief in universal salvation. William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) of Boston was the most eminent Unitarian clergyman of his time. His influence in linking Unitarianism to humanism cannot be underrated. His was the impulse which sent many prominent New Englanders to work for the reform movement in the second quarter of nineteenth century. Many of these New Englanders were influenced by ideas that they encountered during their visits to Europe. They came round to the conviction that Unitarianism should not merely content itself with "negations" but should seek to play a still more positive role in improving the human condition.

The belief that man could apprehend religious and moral truths intuitively became the central idea of what was known as Transcendentalist movement. In addition to Ralph Waldo Emerson, this group of Transcendentalists included at one time or another, Theodore Parker, Henry Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne as well as women such as Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody. They were severe critics of the cult of materialism and the defects of governments, laws, social institutions.

The major impulse to the call for reform, as far as non-elite groups were concerned, came from the older Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist Churches. Their teaching appealed to the large mass of common people, too unsophisticated to understand theological debate. The message of their "revivalists" was powerfully delivered at "sinners" who were called upon to redeem themselves, accept God and the path of righteousness. The revivalists of the 1820's combined the desire to save souls with an active interest in social reform. Several of the leading lights in this category came from reasonably well-to-do but middle-class backgrounds. Their class was one that was being increasingly pushed back by the rise of the class that forged ahead because of the march of industry and commerce. It is noteworthy that the "typical reformer was unconsciously the product of social changes underway in the North."⁵

5 T. Harry Williams, Richard N. Current, and Friedel, A History of the United States to 1876 (New York, 1963), p. 401.

The outstanding figure of the revivalist crusade was Rev. Charles Grandison Finney. Ordained as a Presbyterian minister he later became a Congregationalist. His early career was as an evangelist in Ohio and he was to rise subsequently to the Presidency of Oberlin College. "Like all Jacksonians, Finney had an ardent faith in the idea of progress, in the benevolence of God, and in the dignity and worth of the common man...." ⁶ Yet characteristically Finney did not vote for Jackson as he thought that the other side had more moral men. His speeches, published under the title Revivals of Religion, show that for Finney, reform was called for in every aspect of society. Thus Finney raised his eloquent voice not only against slavery but also against alcohol, tea and coffee. Not only did he call for greater educational opportunities but also improvements in hygiene. Finney's converts were to play a significant role in the reform movement. Theodore Dwight Weld was one of his pupils.

The early reformers had little interest in politics. John L. Thomas notes that "the initial thrust of religious reform...was moral rather than social, preventive rather than curative. Nominally rejecting politics and parties, the evangelicals looked to a general reformation of American character achieved through a revival of piety and morals in the individuals...." ⁷

6 David Brion Davis, ed., Ante-Bellum Reform (New York, 1967), pp. 98 and 102.

7 John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America", American Quarterly (Philadelphia), vol. 17, no. 4, Winter 1965, p. 658.

The reorientation of American theology under a variety of influences led to the adaptation by orthodoxy of a minor, but significant point, that salvation lay open to everyone. Sin was voluntary, men were not helpless. Once the age seized upon these points, perfectionism was its result.

Education was the most direct means of improving the capacity of the individual to perfect himself. Yet, as of 1830, there was no system for primary education for the mass of the people. "The decline of apprenticeship eliminated a traditional form of instruction and created among the artisans an acute sensitivity to the need for a change."⁸ A shift began to occur in the 1860's. This was due largely to the efforts of Horace Mann, the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education after 1837. Mann voiced a truly revolutionary sentiment when he proclaimed: "Now surely nothing, but universal education can counterwork this tendency to the domination of capital and the servility of labor."⁹

Similarly, William Maclure, a collaborator of Robert Owen in the New Harmony experiment believed, that in so far as the rich controlled the educational system, they would use it as an instrument of class rule. He was influenced to a great degree

8 Uscar Handlin, The History of the United States, 2 vols.
(New York, 1967), vol. I, p. 508.

0 Cited by Williams, et al, n. 5, p. 402.

by the Pestalozzi school system and encouraged the spread of its ideas to the United States. Characteristically he willed a large proportion of his money to set up working men's libraries in the United States. He advocated the building of a free public school system under the control of the electors. He advocated self-education for workers to safeguard their rights. It was his emphasis on the need for a class-conscious self-education of the oppressed which marks a great advance on earlier thinking.¹⁰

The struggle for public education was carried forward vigorously and significant progress was made during the period 1830-1850, especially in the North-east. It is noteworthy that the future Radical Republican, Thaddeus Stevens was, during this period a vigorous advocate of public education. Though much remained to be done by 1860, a decisive shift in attitudes had occurred.

In the sphere of higher education the impact of the reform movement was considerably less. A notable development was the proliferation of a number of private colleges largely denominational. Between 1830 and 1850 some eighty colleges were founded, largely ill-endowed and poorly staffed. These colleges, in any case, served only a small fraction of the population.

10 David Harris, Socialist Origins in the United States: American Forerunners of Marx, 1817-1832 (Assen, Ven Gorcum & Co., n. d.), pp. 69-72.

The large mass of adults looked to the "penny-press", begun in 1833 with the New York Sun, for knowledge and entertainment.

Public issues were discussed in most communities in debating societies, literary societies, and library associations. The "lyceum movement, initiated in 1826 by Josiah Holbrook, a New Englander, served as an agency for stimulating adult education. Reformers were to make increasing use of such forums.

The reform movement first manifested itself in the form of humanitarian activities. They involved demands for better and for more rational treatment of paupers, criminals, and the insane.

The brightest star in the firmament of such reformers was Dorothea Lynde Dix. She was influenced by William Ellery Channing, the "Father of New England Renaissance". In 1841, she presented a memorial to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, detailing the awful conditions of insane asylums in the state. She was violently criticized for this. Fortunately amongst her friends was Samuel Gridley Howe. Howe, the scion of an old Puritan family, received his M.D. from Harvard and had spent six years fighting in the Greek War of Independence. Deeply imbued by the idea of progress, it was fortunate that he was chairman of the legislative committee on institutions. Together with Charles Graham Sumner, he undertook remedial measures. One of the first and the best institutions for lunatics was established at Worcester immediately. Dorothea Lynde Dix pursued a crusade

from Rhode Island to New Jersey. In four years she visited 18 prisons, 300 jails, and 500 alm houses and other institutions and "travelled over 10,000 miles by stage, steamboat and horse-back...."¹¹ During the Civil War she was Superintendent of Nurses in the Union Army.

In a similar vein, Samuel Girdley Howe pioneered the education of the handicapped. Starting from 1837 he laboured in teaching the blind, deaf, and mentally retarded children. He played an active part in general educational reform as well as the anti-slavery movement.¹²

In the general trend for reform of criminals and lunatics, many reformers came to the conclusion that the consumption of alcohol was the main cause of these evils. There was little else in the American past to lay the basis of the Temperance Movement. The Puritans did not forgo alcohol, nor were they overtly conscious of its evils. It was the Quakers and the Methodists who laid the groundwork for the Temperance upsurge of the 1820's. In 1826 the American society for Promotion of Temperance arose to coordinate various groups. "The movement gained in sensationalism

11 See Gerald N. Grob and Robert N. Beck, American Ideas: Source Readings in the Intellectual History of the United States: 1629-1865, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), vol. I, p. 232.

12 Ibid., p. 395. The other service organizations that came into existence were the American Home Missionary Society, the American Tract Society, the American Peace Society and the Society to Improve the Condition of Sailors.

when [in 1840] six reformed drunkards of Baltimore organized the Washington Temperance Society and began to draw crowds to hear their intriguing confessions...."¹³ The movement took root in the 1840's with some preachers calling for moderation and others for total abstinence.

The significance of the movement in respect of the present study lies in the fact that many abolitionists cut their teeth while labouring in the Temperance circuit. Thus, Theodore Dwight Weld, a convert to the revivalism of Finney was the ablest Temperance speaker in the American North-west.¹⁴ Lyman Beecher was another leader of the anti-slavery movement who laboured in the vineyard of Temperance and other reform causes.

Another significant fact is that the passionate advocates of Temperance sought to mobilize political support for promoting their cause. Joseph R. Gusfield notes "the intensity of its [Temperance] support and influence of its political power" which were to be surpassed only subsequently, by the anti-slavery movement. There were ideological similarities between Abolition and Temperance. Gusfield points out: "They were both highly moralistic and perfectionist... [They occurred] in the same parts of the society--the native American independent farmer of the Mid-west and East. The identification with anti-slavery was

13 Ibid., pp. 395 and 406.

14 Ibid., p. 391.

strong enough to stifle completely the organization of the Temperance movement in the South...."¹⁵

It was in the immigrant population that opposition to Temperance developed. The Republicans in 1854 were out-spokenly for prohibition. As they became a national party and the strength of the immigrant voter became evident they dropped the prohibition plank from their platform.¹⁶

The launching of the feminist crusade, as Merle Curti points out, was a direct outcome of the desire of a small group of women to participate in the abolitionist movement. The refusal of the existing anti-slavery organizations to countenance their presence and in, 1840, the rejection by the World Anti-Slavery Convention to accept women delegates provoked a women's rights movement in the United States.¹⁷ The first Women's Rights Convention was held in 1848, at Seneca Falls, New York. A Declaration of Sentiments paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence indicted men for their tyranny over women and declared that "all men and women are created equal." It called for women to gain

15 Joseph R. Gusfield, "Temperance Social Control and Mobility", n. 6, p. 135. As a consequence of the movement several New England states experimented with prohibition. In 1851, as a response to agitation led by the Quaker Neal Dow, Maine instituted state wide prohibition. Prohibitionists in many other states gained victory but opposition developed and laws were soon repealed except in Maine.

16 See National Party Platforms: 1840-1964 (Urbana, 1966), Comp. Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce.

17 Curti, n. 2, p. 376.

immediate "admission to all rights and privileges" as citizens of the United States.¹⁸ While feminists failed to gain the right to hold office or vote, they made some advance before the Civil War. This was due, to a considerable extent, to their participation in, and contribution to, the very anti-slavery movement which had initially sought to exclude them. A number of women did achieve fame on the basis of their individual and professional achievements.¹⁹

The reform impulse also had its antecedents in the rise of industrialism in the United States. This force threw up the class of the urban proletariat. This class of workers grew in numbers as the productive system of capitalism took hold. Its antecedents lay in the rural areas of New England and in the increasing number of immigrants. The condition of the workers in the nascent factory system was deplorable. Apologists of slavery were often subsequently to compare it unfavourably with slavery.²⁰ Entire families were sucked into the vortex of the

18 John M. Blum, et al, The American Experience (London, 1963), p. 247.

19 Such were Elizabeth Blackwell, the physician; Elizabeth Oakes Smith and Lucy Stone both lyceum lecturers; Margaret Fuller, who edited the Dial, and wrote the influential feminist treatise, Women in the Nineteenth Century; Lydia Maria Child, the abolitionist whose popular An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans was noted for its erudite scholarship; Antoinette Louisa Brown Blackwell an ordained minister of the Congregational Church; see Grob and Beck, n. 11, p. 389; Curti, n. 2, p. 378; Louis Ruchames, ed., Racial Thought in America (Amherst, 1969), p. 316.

20 See George Fitzhugh, "Cannibals All"! cited by Hacker, n. 4, pp. 541, 543-46.

factory, men, women and children. This created major dislocations in the existing social fabric of the United States.

"As early as 1823 signs of labor's awakening made themselves evident...."²¹ Workers in various trades began to organize themselves. In 1827, the Philadelphia Mechanics Union of Trade Association was launched as the first city-wide confederation of workers in different trades. The theoretician of this movement was William Heighton (1800-1873), a cordwainer by trade. He was the principal editor of the weekly Mechanics' Free Press, possibly the first labour paper in the United States. He was "almost certainly" the author of the "Preamble of the Mechanics Union of Trade Association."²² This preamble, notes Philip Foner "is a truly remarkable document with a surprisingly modern ring." It asserted that a rise in living standards of the workers would benefit the employers because higher wages would mean greater buying power and general prosperity. In 1828, the Working Men's Party was established. In 1831 the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen came into existence. The importance of the Association lay in its attempt to weld together all groups of workers under a single organization. The leaders of the movement were, John B. Eldredge and Samuel Whitcomb, Jr., trade union leaders, Charles Douglas,

21 See Philip S. Foner, History of the Labour Movement in the United States, 5 vols. (New York, 1972), vol. I, p. 101.

22 Ibid., p. 15.

editor of the New England Artisan, a weekly labour paper from Rhode Island. Seth Luther's "Address to the Working Men of New England" was widely read during the 1830's. "It was both a call to action and a penetrating analysis of conditions in the New England factories...."²³

Foner states that one hundred and sixty eight strikes²⁴ took place between 1833-37. Women too entered the fray. Of the dislocations caused by the factory system, surely the most severe were faced by women. But now as an integral part of the new class they too struggled shoulder to shoulder with men. "Indeed, the factory girls were among the most courageous fighters of the period, for they had to conduct their struggles not only against their employers but against the overwhelming prejudice of their time against public activity of women."²⁵ In 1834 when factory owners cut wages in Dover, N.H., and Lowell, Mass., the girls struck work. In 1836, Lowell girls struck again and formed the "Factory Girls Association". Though most strikes were broken, the important principle of militant struggle for democratic rights was made a reality.

The movement towards working class unity led to the formation of central labour bodies or city centrals in more than a

23 Hacker, n. 4, pp. 387-91; and Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 106.

24 Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 108.

25 Ibid., pp. 108-9.

dozen cities. The most effective of these was the General Trade's Union of New York founded in 1833.²⁶ There were attempts to set up national unions but they were premature as even the complete integration the economy at the national scale had yet to occur.

The principal thrust of the labour movement was towards higher wages and shorter working hours. The struggle for a ten-hour day was begun by Boston carpenters in 1825 and 1832. In 1835, under the leadership of Seth Luther and others, another struggle was launched. This, too, failed despite a strong support from all sections of the workers. The circular issued by the Boston strikers was the spark that lit the prairie fire. It led to the first general strike in an American city, Philadelphia. The support was so overwhelming that the Philadelphia city government conceded the workers demand. A wave of strikes swept the country, most of which were successful. By the end of 1835, with the exception of Boston, the standard days work for skilled mechanics was ten hours.²⁷ It must be emphasized that the struggle of the working class for reform was not conducted in an isolated fashion. Being as yet a weak and embryonic class, they could not have conducted their struggle without some sympathetic support from sections of the middle class.

26 Foster Rhea Dulles, Labor in America: A History (New York, 1966), p. 59.

27 Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 118. The movement for the 10-hour day helped in the formation of the New England Working Men's Association in 1844. See Joseph G. Rayback, A History of American Labor (New York, 1959), pp. 92-98.

The struggle to form working men's party went together with the struggle to unionize. The Workingmen's Party was an attempt by the working class with greater class consciousness, to fashion their own destiny. Along with the parties came the rise of the labour press. Almost fifty labor weeklies were published in cities and towns during the years 1827-1832 the most influential ones being the Working Men's Advocate, the Daily Sentinel, The Free Inquirer, and The Man.²⁸ The papers advanced causes such as that for an establishment of a system of public education for the poor, the abolition of the compulsory militia system, abolishment of imprisonment for debt--a particularly sore point with the workers. At a more ideological level, the labour press attacked monopolies--particularly banking monopolies, which, in those days of free-wheeling banking practices, caused great hardship to the labouring classes. They supported a host of other causes which in retrospect seem so just, yet caused no small indignation in conservative circles of those days.

The first working class party, as has already been noted, was launched in Philadelphia in 1828. Faced with an organized and virulent attack by conservatives the party soon collapsed. In New York, under the vigorous leadership of Thomas Skidmore a self-educated mechanic, the Working Men's Party founded in 1829 achieved greater success. This Party, too, was the outcome of

28 Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 122.

the ten-hour day movement. Skidmore was the advocate of a radical transformation of the existing property relations. He called for an abolition of wills and a system of full state support to the old and the infirm. He was quick to attack utopian reformers like Robert Dale Owen. He criticized their paternal view of the working class. He refused to accept any compromise of the principle of equal division of property and the logic of his position made him an early advocate of women's rights as well as the rights of Negroes.²⁹ His profound criticisms of the ideas of Robert Owen and Robert Dale Owen led him to the view that, at an objective level, the utopian "serves the cause of oppression".³⁰

It was the increasing difference in views that led Thomas Skidmore to break away from the party which fell increasingly under the control of Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright, a militant champion of women's rights and abolitionism. They viewed economic demands as secondary to the basic issue of a national system of free public education. They even went to the extent of proposing a state-guardianship plan whereby which, the entire upbringing of working-class children would be undertaken by state institutions. The Working Men's Party became defunct by 1831.

The crisis of 1837 was a terrible blow to the working class movements. The depression of four years left one third of the work force, some 200,000 unemployed.³¹ The employers were

29 Ibid., pp. 123-29; Harris, n. 10, pp. 8 and 127.

30 Harris, n. 10, pp. 127-28.

31 Dulles, n. 26, p. 71.

quick to launch an offensive. In despair, the working class, whose leadership had often pointed out the faults of the industrial system, veered towards utopianism. They came under the influence of Europeans, Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. This utopianism was essentially a reaction to the alienation created in human society by the spread of industrialization. The leaders called for the spread of a communal co-operative society. Owen looked to industrialism as basically progressive while Fourier looked on it as a great evil. Thus while Owen wanted abolition of property rights, Fourier wanted to preserve them. They represented two ends of the spectrum of utopian reformers.

The New Harmony community was one of the eighteen which Owenites established between 1826-1827 but they were failures and by 1828 "Owenism as a movement had practically disappeared...."³² Some forty subsequent experiments in communal living were conducted but failed.³³ Foner attributes their failure to raise sufficient capital.³⁴ This was despite the fact that the utopians main thrust was, in an era of growing class conflict, to eliminate the contradiction between capital and labour. The capitalists, the masters of the rising economy, were confident

32 Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 173. Owen's principal American convert was Albert Brisbane, whose Association of Man; or, Association and Reorganization of Industry was widely read and influenced Horace Greeley.

33 Grob and Beck, n. 11, p. 403.

34 Philip S. Foner, n. 21, p. 178.

of their power and did not need to compromise as the utopians suggested.

Another group called the Agrarians or National Reformers, led by George Henry Evans, formerly editor of Working Man's Advocate and The Man, believed that the increasing pauperization of the working poor could be halted by the rational use of the vast land resources of the nation. They attacked the monopoly control of land by a few individuals. Evans foresaw the fact that westward emigration would compel employers to maintain high wages in the east. He foresaw the massive scope for European immigration to the United States. The Agrarians did not, like the utopians, depend on or ask for capitalist support. Evans appealed to the working class and to broaden his appeal, he formed the National Reform Association. He gained the support of Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune and some experienced labor leaders like Seth Luther, John Ferral and John Commerford.³⁵ The movement got some working-class support.

It is doubtful whether, given the high cost of migration, land reform alone as a programme, could mitigate or solve the problems of the workers. Similarly, the homestead idea, as expressed in the Act of 1862, was nowhere remotely connected to the ideas propounded by George Henry Evans and even by the subsequent Free Soil Party.

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35 Dulles, n. 26, pp. 22-84; Philip S. Foner, n. 21, pp. 184-86 and Hacker, n. 4, p. 99.

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The anti-slavery movement had its roots deep in American thought. Though individuals had taken stands against slavery in the eighteenth century, the first anti-slavery effort by a group was taken by the Quakers. From a process beginning in 1729, the Friends founded in 1775, a Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, with sixteen members out of twenty-four being Quakers.³⁶ The Evangelical Church members in the older Southern states, too, were important in their support for abolition. The Reverened George Bourne, a Virginia Congregationalist, published The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable in 1816. He was condemned by the Presbetyrian Church and compelled to move North. The most important of Southern anti-slavery figures were Elihu Embree, Charles Osborn, both Friends, and the Reverened John Rankin, a Presbetyrian. Louis Filler, whose work, The Crusade Against Slavery, is a noteworthy contribution to the literature on the abolitionist movement, considers Rankin's Letters on Slavery³⁷ (1826), a "landmark in American abolition."³⁸

A total of some one hundred and thirty anti-slavery societies were in existence in the United States in 1827. Their actual influence was rather small.

36 Herbert Aptheker, Towards Negro Freedom (New York, 1956), pp. 10-35.

37 Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery: 1830-1860 (New York, 1960), pp. 17-18.

38 Avery Craven, The Coming of the Civil War (Chicago, 1963), p. 119.

Before the impact of the general reform impulse turned the anti-slavery movement into the abolitionist "crusade" the American Colonization Society was the major vehicle of "anti-slavery" feelings among the ruling groups in the United States. The Society was established in 1817 with the powerful influence of elements of Southern aristocracy like Judge Bushrod Washington, the first President's nephew, Henry Clay and John Randolph. In 1819, Congress passed an Anti-Slave Trade Act intended to suppress slave trade by returning Negroes from captured slavers to Africa. In 1820 the first shipload of "colonists" left for the West African coast and in 1822, Liberia was founded. The Society received private contributions and appropriations from the legislatures of Maryland and Virginia to carry on the work.

The colonization movement sought on the one hand to end Negro bondage in the United States and, on the other, to remove the Negro from a country, where they felt, the Negro could never have an independent and dignified existence. Further, they felt that, given the prevailing logic that the slave system was on the decline, only the fear of social dislocation prevented more manumissions. They hoped that colonization would result in the swift demise of slavery in the country. Reality, however, militated against this view. From 1830 to 1860, with the rapid industrial growth both in the United States and Europe, the demand for cotton made it "king". Far from being a declining institution plantation slavery tightened its hold and developed, much to the

dismay of its milder opponents, a new ideology and mythology. The efforts of the Colonization Society could not even keep pace with the natural increase of the Negro population in the United States.

The free Negroes opposed the colonizationists. They were aware of the contempt and hatred for free Negroes that had inspired many of the Society's supporters. Further they asserted that their destiny lay in America, that they knew no other land, and that they were as American as any white.

David Walker, a free Negro, who published in 1829 Walker's Appeal in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States, represented this awakening consciousness. It was a bitter view of the wrongs Negroes had suffered, it called plainly for violence and revolt.³⁹ This pamphlet was circulated widely in the South too. Obsessed by fear of "slave revolts" Southern states responded by outlawing Negro education and warning of severe action against those guilty of circulating "incendiary publications".

While response of Negroes like Walker was due to the actual wrongs and injustice suffered by their race, the anti-slavery sentiments among concerned whites arose from a sense of "religious obligation". Filler cites the case of Joshua Leavitt, the country's

39: Herbert Aptheker, Essays in the History of the American Negro (New York, 1945), pp. 146-47.

first Temperance lecturer who founded the Evangelist in New York in the 1830's. Leavitt graduated progressively to the abolitionist movement and in 1837 became editor of the Emancipator, the vehicle of the American Anti-Slavery Society. He was a major influence on many anti-slavery leaders.

Benjamin Lundy was the "giant among anti-slavery precursors." A Quaker, and a saddler by profession, settled in Ohio, he travelled widely across the United States. He organized the Union Humane Society which gained some five hundred adherents. In 1821, he began to publish the Genius of Universal Emancipation, which became the leading anti-slavery paper of the 1820's. In his travels he met Arthur Tappan, a rich New York businessman, who along with his brother Lewis, proponents of temperance and religious reform, were becoming known for their strong support to anti-slavery groups. In Boston, he met William Lloyd Garrison, who helped him to issue his paper for a time.

The abolition movement in the 1820's was part and parcel of the general stirring towards reform visible in that period in the United States. It is clear that it was interlinked, both in leadership and expression, with the Temperance crusade, women's rights, educational reform, prison reform, and other manifestations of the humanitarian impulse. It was connected to the

40 Filler, n. 37, pp. 24-25.

41 Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, Bound With Them in Chains: A Biographical History of the Antislavery Movement (Westport, 1972), pp. 90-114.

utopian experiments towards community living to foster economic and social justice. It was linked to the upsurge of the working-class to assert economic and social justice for themselves. It was reflected in the drive to unseat "aristocrats" and to re-establish "democracy" in the United States. The anti-slavery effort grew to its pre-eminent status as "reform of reforms" only gradually. It was able to generate public opinion and support from a wide spectrum of reformers. This must, however, not be confused with the fact that the Garrisonian brand of abolitionism to be discussed presently, drew little popular support from these elements even in its heyday.

It is often stated that the working class extended little support to the anti-slavery movement.⁴² The problem lay in the hostility of prominent abolitionists especially William Lloyd Garrison to working class movements. In the very first issue of the Liberator he stated: "We are the friends of reform but this is not reform.... Their [The New England Association of Working Men's] object is to inflame the minds of our working class against the opulent...."⁴³ only the efforts and sympathy of Brisbane, Owen, Greeley and Wendell Phillips could convince the

42 Joseph G. Rayback, "The American Workingman and the Anti-Slavery Crusade", Journal of Economic History (New York), vol. 3.

43 Cited by Herman Schluter, Lincoln, Labor and Slavery: A Chapter from the Social History of America (Socialist Literature Co., New York, 1913), p. 111.

abolitionists and middle-class reformers to accept the working class cause. Nevertheless as Thomas Wentworth Higginson has pointed out that:

The anti-slavery movement was not strongest in the more educated classes, but was predominantly a people's movement, based on the simplest human instincts and far stronger for a time in the factories and shoe-shops than in the pulpits or colleges. 44

The qualitative transformation in the anti-slavery movement which occurred in 1830 was the result of the several such trends outlined above but the change was triggered off by the slave revolt, in Virginia in 1831, led by Nat Turner.⁴⁵ This began a phase of great repression in the South and the rise of Garrisonian immediatism in the North. The two trends helped to bury the mild anti-slavery societies clustered in the South.

Two primary centres of the crusade began to develop. One was in the New England industrial regions under the leadership

44 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Cheerful Yesterdays (Boston, 1898), quoted by Herman Schluter, n. 43, p. 38. See also Williston H. Lofton, "Abolition and Labor", The Journal of Negro History (Washington, D.C.), vol. 33, July 1948, no. 3. Lofton has shown that while large sections of the working-class were sympathetic to abolitionism, those sections apathetic had reasons to believe that (a) their problems were more immediate; (b) Negro emancipation would hurt labour.

45 See Herbert Aptheker, Negro Slave Revolts (New York, 1963), pp. 268-322. Eugene D. Genovese, however, criticizes Aptheker for overrating the value of the revolts. See Eugene D. Genovese, In Red and Black (New York, 1971), pp. 131-32. Nevertheless, the psychological fear of slave revolts helped by white abolitionists was a very real thing in the South in the period 1820-1865.

of William Lloyd Garrison. The other lay in the region around New York City and the North-west, receiving financial support from the city and leadership from Theodore Dwight Weld and others.

Garrison, the founder-editor of the famous abolitionist paper Liberator, came up from humble means by sheer grit and single-mindedness. He had moved from editing the general reform and Temperance paper, the National Philanthropist, to editing Lundy's mild reform Genius of Universal Emancipation in 1829. Initially, he had accepted the view of a gradualist policy of emancipation. But, he shifted to the immediatist position which was to be the cornerstone of the militant anti-slavery crusade. He was determined, with his fierce convictions, that slavery was a sin to be eradicated root and branch. He did not falter in his convictions as, for him, "...the scriptures and the Declaration of Independence had already settled the issue. Slavery could have no legal status in a Christian democracy. If the Constitution recognized it, then the Constitution should be destroyed...."⁴⁶

In a pamphlet of 1832 he launched an attack on the American Colonization Society. With a remarkable grasp of the problem he realized the nature of colonizationism. He was to be proved by the ultimate test - that of history. He stated:

Already the line of division is drawn: On one side are the friends of truth and liberty, with their banner floating high

in the air on which are inscribed in letters of light, 'IMMEDIATE ABOLITION' - "NO COMPROMISE WITH OPPRESSORS" - 'EQUAL RIGHTS' - 'NO EXPATRIATION' - 'DUTY AND NOT CONSEQUENCES' - 'LET JUSTICE BE DONE, THOUGH THE HEAVENS SHOULD FALL!' - On the other side stand the supporters and apologists of slavery in mighty array, with a black flag on which are seen in bloody characters, 'AFRICAN COLONIZATION' - 'POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY' - 'NO EQUALITY' - 'NO REPENTENCE' - 'EXPULSION OF THE BLACKS' - 'PROTECTION TO TYRANTS!' - Who can doubt the issue of the controversy.... 47

Garrison helped in the establishment in 1832, of the New England Anti-Slavery Society and, in 1833, of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The impact of his pamphlet mentioned above helped to hasten the demise of colonizationism. The Tappan brothers broke away and went on to help Garrison and the abolitionist cause.

Meanwhile, the New York and Mid-western group of abolitionists, too, were inspired to organize. With the help of financial and organizational support from the Tappans, people like Joshua Leavitt, William Jay, Issac T. Hopper, and others in New York, Philadelphians such as Evan Lewis, Beriah Green and J.G., Whittier, along with the Garrisonians set up the American⁴⁸ Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia in October 1833.

The New York center, however, gained its prominence through the efforts of Theodore Dwight Weld already the most able Temperance orator in the North-west. Influenced by the

47 Cited by Filler, n. 37, p. 52.

48 Filler, n. 37, p. 66; see also Gilbert H. Barnes, The Anti-Slavery Impulse: 1830-1844 (New York, 1964), pp. 100-8.

revivalist crusade of Finney, Weld moved from Temperance to anti-slavery, from colonizationism to abolition. He had been sent to find a place for a manual labour institution in the West. He established himself at the Lane Seminary at Cincinnati in Ohio. With the help of the Tappans, he brought a contingent of Oneida Institute students there. Here, Weld instituted the Lane Debate on slavery which brought together all the students and most of the faculty. This debate went on for some eighteen days running and came out against colonization and for immediate abolition of slavery.

In October 1834, some forty of the ninety brilliant assembly of students (including Weld) resigned from the Seminary to carry the work of the anti-slavery crusade to all parts of the West.⁴⁹ A similar transformation occurred at Oberlin Institute that had been established in 1833. Asa Mahan, a vigorous champion of Weld and his Lane rebels, headed the institution from 1834 onward when financial difficulties brought the Tappans in with a \$10,000 contribution. The college was already co-educational--a pioneer in the field, now it was compelled to accept Negroes.

This age has often been called the "Martyr's Age" of abolitionism. The North saw a number of anti-abolitionist action. In 1834, a mob destroyed the home of Lewis Tappan. In 1835 a Boston mob treated Garrison so roughly that he was taken into

49 Barnes, n. 48, pp. 64-71.

custody for his own protection. In 1837, a mob in Alton, Illi-⁵⁰nois, murdered Elijah Lovejoy, a well-known abolitionist editor. Henry B. Stanton, a Lane rebel, was mobbed at least two hundred⁵¹ times. There were riots, tarring-and-feathering incidents and attacks on Negroes all over the North. These incidents showed that, in those days, as even at present, a sizable segment of Northern opinion, while quite content to hear Southern failings denounced, had little patience with those who supported actions tending to change the position of Negroes in their own neighbourhoods.

It is a tribute to the convictions of the abolitionists that they maintained their zeal and carried on their labours. When riots in Utica, N.Y., prevented some six hundred delegates from forming an anti-slavery society, Gerrit Smith, a long time colonizationist, invited them over to his estate at Peterboro and went over to the abolitionist cause. Similarly James G. Birney, a wealthy Alabama lawyer turned away from his life as a planter and after a brief flirtation with the colonizationists,⁵² became a abolitionist.

While Garrison moved in the mid-thirties to a host of other reforms, such as Temperance, feminism, the peace crusade, Weld shaped the New York movement in a different direction.

50 Blum, et al, n. 18, p. 253.

51 Filler, n. 37, p. 72.

52 Ibid., pp. 73-74.

Weld's influence on the movement was always moderate and organizational. Garrison, on the other hand, had little time to organize; he was a leader and agitator. As the movement grew in size he began to lose his control over it.

Under the influence of Weld, the anti-slavery crusade moved into the political arena. Weld, however, never consciously intended it so. He wanted to use the right of petition to Congress as a platform to espouse the views of abolitionists. His program began with the despatch of petitions to Congress calling for an end to slavery in the District of Columbia. Soon petitions began to pour in such quantities as to pose a problem to the functioning of Congress. Here, the abolitionists found an improbable supporter in John Quincy Adams, former President and statesman extraordinary. Adams was no abolitionist and took the view, initially, that Congress was unable to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia. It is only when the South demanded not only a pledge of Congressional non-interference with slavery, but the immediate tabling of such petitions, that Adams came to the fore. Under Southern pressure a "gag-rule" was subsequently passed.

Gagged by the rules Adams showed his tenacity and skill by finding ways to present the petitions despite constant threat

53 Aileen S. Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (New York, 1969), pp. 164-70.

of censure and expulsion. He presented thousands of petitions, abolitionist in sentiment, though varying in content. He was moderate in his personal position regarding slavery which was close to that of Leavitt and William Ellery Channing, the famous Unitarian pastor of Boston. He insisted in a letter to Lewis Tappan that the difference between him and the abolitionists was⁵⁴ "one of deliberate judgement, and not of principle."

Increasingly the petitions became more sophisticated and replete with much data provided by Theodore Dwight Weld and William Jay. In Congress itself Adams found allies, as Craven points out, "Anti-slavery politicians such as Joshua Giddings and Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, quickly proved the value of the cause as a stepping-stone to public office."⁵⁵

By the end of the 1830's, abolitionism was heady with its "successes", but, the signs of weakness were already there. Ideologically the New England and New York movements had failed to link up. Garrison's tactics and his self-righteousness were a problem, Weld was too conscious of his failings and was often unsure of himself. He had refused all offers to become an officer in any abolitionist society. He slowly eased himself out of the abolitionist crusade. His book Slavery As It Is, published in 1839, a documented compilation of incidents regarding slavery was of great importance and influence. Yet, Weld did not

54 Craven, n. 38, p. 140; Filler, n. 37, pp. 100-3.

55 Craven, n. 38, p. 140; Barnes, n. 48, pp. 121-45.

participate actively in the movement after 1842. ⁵⁶

The schism in the abolitionist ranks was at one level a natural outcome of the varied antecedents that combined to give it birth. The unique personality of Garrison had given the movement much of its strength, yet, it gave rise to its weakness too. Garrison sincerely feared for the purity of abolitionism. He was insistent upon debate and discussion, but failed to devote the time and attention that was needed for organization. He made no effort to force his opinions on others. His societies were loose federations of individuals who accepted the Liberator as their mouthpiece. ⁵⁷

It was his advocacy of women's rights that led to the split in the movement. Women were, at this stage, a vital component of the reform impulse yet this was not recognized by other reform leaders such as Birney, Lewis Tappan and Leavitt. They wanted a conventionally organized movement. In his own eyes Garrison was maintaining abolitionist principles against short-sighted reformers. Moreover, he viewed the right to free speech with a fanatical fervour. ⁵⁸

When the New England Anti-Slavery Convention met in May 1838, it accepted women in the organization on equal terms. The move that set off bitter infighting which led to the packing of

56 Filler, n. 37, p. 72.

57 Kraditor, n. 53, p. 153.

58 Ibid., pp. 165-68.

the American Anti-Slavery Convention in New York by the Garrisonians in 1840. When Abby Kelley's name was proposed and upheld for the business committee by a vote of 560 to 450, the split was complete between the New York and New England groups. 59

In retrospect it is clear that a deeper reason lay behind the split. The difference could be traced to the interpretation which the term "immediate emancipation" could be subject to. To the Garrisonians it meant exactly that--universal emancipation of slavery to be implemented at once. But to a large section of abolitionists this was a fantastic notion. Whether due to their innate conservatism or their sense of realism, they believed that the programme of emancipation should begin at once, with a period of transition, to gradual complete emancipation. The Garrisonians could not compromise from a stand from which they gained their strength and motivation. The mild enthusiasts of anti-slavery could never gain the moral appeal of the Garrisonians and in a sense needed them to lend a perspective and a necessary guide to their views. 60

The problem was one of harmoniously combining idealism and realism. Aileen Kraditor remarks that to criticize Garrisonians for not pitching their demands at a more practical level, is to miss the point. As an agitator, Wendell Phillips exclaimed,

59. Louis Ruchames, ed., The Abolitionists: A Collection of Their Writings (New York, 1963), p. 17; Filler, n. 37, pp. 135-36.

60. Kraditor, n. 53, pp. 165-68.

"Caution is not always a good policy in a cause like ours....
 slavery will yield only to the most radical treatment." ⁶¹ Subse-
 quent events more than justified this view and vindicated Filler's
 judgement that Garrison's "persistent idealism shone with increas-
 ing brightness...at the expense of earnest apparently more compe-
 tent abolitionists. Their movement needed realism but it could
 not live without the working idealism of the extremists." ⁶²

The divisions in the movement began to grow between conser-
 vative and radical abolitionists during the 1840's. Some aboli-
 tionists wanted to attract a broader cross-section of society to
 the anti-slavery cause and to make the American Anti-Slavery
 Society into the nucleus of a new political pressure group.
 Garrison had come to take the stand that slavery could not be
 eliminated as long as the non-slave states remained to support
 the Constitution and government. ⁶³ He could thus view political
 pressure groups and parties based on anti-slavery as an expedient
 at best. He thought the time inexpedient for such a move and
 opposed this trend brought in by James G. Birney and Henry B.
 Stanton, Gerrit Smith, Arthur Tappan and Salmon P. Chase among
 others.

This group formed the Liberty Party in 1839, and contested
 in the election of 1844 with James G. Birney as their Presidential

61 Wendell Phillips, cited by Ruchames, n. 54, pp. 241-44.

62 Filler, n. 37, p. 137.

63 Ruchames, n. 59, p. 23; Kraditor, n. 53, pp. 127-28.

candidate. The Party's main plank was abolition of slavery, and its candidate gained only 7,000 votes in 1840, and 62,300 in 1844. Kraditor notes that the failure of the Party made it evident that anti-slavery by itself was not a viable political issue.⁶⁴ Elements from this Party split off to lend the anti-slavery component of the Free Soil Party which was to broaden the appeal of the anti-slavery cause by campaigning against the extension of slavery into free territories.

In various ways, in the next decade, the abolitionists sought to broaden their appeal. The inter-connections between moral causes such as Temperance and abolitionism in the 1830's, were now visible. Even elements in the Anti-Masonic and nativist movements showed a response to the abolitionist demand. Such were the anti-slavery positions of Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, Thurlow Weed of New York and William Slade of Vermont.⁶⁵

In 1842, the tempo of the movement had altered. Garrison moaned that Arthur Tappan, James G. Birney, Henry B. Stanton and other anti-slavery stalwarts had all but ceased their labours. "The abolitionists became, from one point of view, mere sects... Garrisonian influence thereafter became a quantity separate from mere numbers...."⁶⁶ But the great task of placing abolitionism

64 Kraditor, n. 53, p. 31, pp. 122-25 and 146-47.

65 Filler, n. 37, pp. 146-47.

66 Ibid., p. 157.

as a front ranking issue in public debate had been accomplished. Now, it was the inner logic of the issue, combined with the persistence of the social problem of Negro slavery that gave "power and consequence" to the issue.

The war with Mexico posed a question to the North and North-west which they could not evade. Was it the Manifest Destiny of the United States to spread slavery or freedom? For a decade after 1846, the machinery of compromise laboured to heal the rift between the North and the South. But, each crisis weakened its capacity to deal with the next. Moderation lost its political utility and the lines of conflict hardened. The Liberty Party gave way to the Free Soil Party of Martin Van Buren which scored heavily in New York in the election of 1848. A new combination of moral idealism of anti-slavery and the economic aspirations of Northern industry and agriculture began to emerge. This was to take up the anti-slavery cause in the 1850's.

The Compromise of 1850 resulted in a step forward for both the abolitionists and the Southern anti-abolitionists, while the slave trade was abolished in Washington, D.C., the Fugitive Slave Law was tightened. It was in effect a formal ceasefire, but it provided newer battle lines. It was the effect of the Fugitive Slave Law that formed the basis of abolitionist struggles and propoganda in the 1850's.

This period saw the emergence of politicians who combined anti-slavery with the economic aspirations of the North and the

North-west. Thus, while Stephen A Douglas was instrumental in inserting the clause favouring popular sovereignty for Utah and New Mexico, William H. Seward of New York came out as the leader of the then extreme wing of anti-slavery politicians in the North. Sent to Congress on a Democratic-Free Soil platform Seward denounced the Compromise. He was perceptive enough to recognize the essentially retrogressive nature of slavery on the process of national development: "We cannot establish slavery", he said, "because there are certain elements...[we] recognize as essential; and these are the security of national rights, the diffusion of knowledge, and the freedom of industry. Slavery is incompatible with all of these...it subverts the principle of democracy, and converts the state into an aristocracy or a despotism."⁶⁷ This speech summed up the growing Northern view, long fanned by abolitionists, that the existence of slavery, in a democratic nation, tended to subvert its principles. These views had been stated often. Seward's "Higher Law" speech denouncing the Compromise of 1850, came at a critical juncture as Northern opinion began to view slavery and slave power as an aggressive threat to Northern well-being. The Compromise thus triggered a "moral revolution" in the North, particularly in Massachusetts. It propelled a new brand of "dogmatic" anti-slavery men such as Charles Sumner, Zachariah Chandler, Salmon P. Chase, John P. Hale

⁶⁷ William H. Seward in Edwin C. Rozwenc, ed., The Compromise of 1850 (Boston, 1957), p. 47.

to the forefront of the Northern political arena. Ralph Waldo Emerson who had remained more or less aloof from the abolition movement through the 1830's and 1840's, entered the mainstream of the anti-slavery agitation. In an address in Concord in May 1851, he voiced the moral outrage of the North:

The sense of injustice is blunted - a sure sign of shallowness of our intellect.... This law $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the Fugitive Slave Law} \end{array} \right\}$ must be made inoperative. It must be abrogated and wiped out from the statute book; but whilst it stands there, it must be disobeyed.... 68

In March 1854 in a lecture in New York City he denounced Webster who had extended his support to the Fugitive Slave Act and done "everything offensive to freedom and good morals". Emerson became a firm supporter of the abolitionists, "the Cassandra that has foretold all that has befallen, fact for fact, years ago...."⁶⁹

Salmon P. Chase began his early career as a moderate anti-slavery man and a lawyer in Cincinnati. In 1836, he helped defend Birney in a law-suit involving a riot, but was slow to move into abolitionist ranks. By 1846, Chase dreamt of uniting the abolitionists and called the great Southern and Western Liberty Convention. He was elected Senator from Ohio in 1848. Similarly, John P. Hale of New Hampshire, emerged as an abolitionist and politician in 1845. He conducted a successful effort

68 The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Cambridge, Mass., 1904), vol. 11, p. 212.

69 Ibid., p. 227.

against the Democratic machine in his state controlled by Charles G. Atherton, the author of the 'gag' rule. He was put up as the Liberty Party candidate for President in 1852 but received only half as many votes as Van Buren in 1848.⁷⁰

Charles G. Sumner was no stranger to the reform movement. He had struggled early the 1820's for Dorothea Dix to establish legal protections for the mentally retarded. Though he emerged as a Whig, his anti-slavery credentials were impeccable to warrant praise from the Garrisonians in 1847.⁷¹

Through the 1850's these men, among many others, moved from varying positions, Free Soil, Whig, Democrat and Liberty, yet they were united in one common bond--that of anti-slavery. While it would be incorrect to see too strong a unity of purpose in their efforts, it was clear that their attitude, for whatever motives, helped to give shape to the anti-slavery cause in these years.

Following the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the "Appeal to Independent Democrats", drawn up by Salmon P. Chase and endorsed amongst others, by Sumner, Giddings and Gerrit Smith represented the major achievement of the political abolitionists.⁷²

70 Williams et al, n. 5, p. 527.

71 Filler, n. 37, p. 43.

72 Ibid., p. 229; see also Elbert B. Smith, The Death of Slavery: The United States, 1837-65 (Chicago, 1967), pp. 128-29; for the career of Giddings see, Pease and Pease, n. 41, pp. 245-75.

This was a moral appeal in the realm of politics. The impact of the reform movement now began to take shape in politics. Other interests were ready to manipulate it for their own purposes. The result was the foundation of the Republican Party.

In Boston, and in the nation to some extent, the moral question became pre-eminent. Theodore Parker, a respected Unitarian minister, prominent in Boston's social and political life, attacked slavery as a threat to democratic institutions. He viewed it as a vehicle of violence, atheism, economic ruin, political stagnation and moral degradation. Parker asked political leaders to legislate against slavery and thundered against the Fugitive Slave Law. His position took him along with Emerson, Thoreau, and Howe, to support John Brown's actions subsequently. ⁷³

Along with Parker was Wendell Phillips, a long time worker for reform and one of the most outstanding orators of the day. He had gone through the Lyceum circuit in the 1820's and been subsequently influenced by Garrison in the 1830's. For almost half a century, his eloquence enchanted or outraged its hearers across New England. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, this patrician agitator came forward to denounce it in the most vehement terms. He was one of the few abolitionists to support the working men's struggle and after the Civil War, he "thoroughly identified himself with the emancipatory aspirations of the workingmen." ⁷⁴

73 Filler, n. 37, pp. 241 and 268.

74 Schluter, n. 43, p. 56.

The barometer of political crisis dropped slowly as the 1850's drew to a close. Coming hard on the Kansas-Nebraska agitation, came the Harper's Ferry Incident. It is futile to go into the merits and demerits of an incident that became part of Northern martyrology and Southern demonology. The most remarkable aspect of this raid, ill conceived and of doubtful value, was that the advanced intellectual opinion in the North came out firmly behind John Brown. Emerson noted that "he was an idealist. He believed in his ideas to the extent that he existed to put them in practice."⁷⁵ Wendell Phillips' words were prophetic: "John Brown has loosened the roots of the slave system; it only⁷⁶ breathes, it does not live--hereafter.

The present survey shows that the search for a moral reformation to erect a just and humane society began to occupy the thoughts and imagination of perceptive men in the United States in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Some of the foremost intellectuals and leaders of the United States were impelled to play a role in one facet or other of the quest for reform. This line of thinking can be traced back to the very origins of the American colonies that had banded together to form "a more perfect union". This idea evolved in its extremity to the search for "perfectionism"--the belief that human institutions were capable of improvement and human beings could be changed.

75 Emerson, n. 67, p. 270.

76 Filler, n. 37, p. 275.

At a broader level these trends must be associated with the significant transformation that came about in productivity in human society, and for the United States, in particular, the immense social mobility spurred by the westward movement.

The spectrum of reform embraced a variety of causes--public land policy, industrial labour and organization, the role of women, education, religion, social habits and so on. Human slavery, thought of in the early decades of the Republic as a dying institution, came under the zealous scrutiny of many of the articulate harbingers of the new age. Slavery in a professedly and almost aggressively (for those times) democratic society was a blatant anachronism. The issue was taken up and raised to a pitch where the unity of the Republic appeared to become an issue.

Advocates of a more just and equitable social order were not lacking at any time in the United States but at no time previously and, in many ways since then, did a sense of moral fervour hold sway over significant numbers of people as it did when the controversy over slavery reached its climax.

The great leader of the Union in the war between the states, Abraham Lincoln has gone down in history as a far-sighted, humane and determined leader, an outstanding product of the American civilization. The purpose of the present inquiry is to examine in the context of the ethos of the moral and ethical fervour that prevailed in that era--a fervour voiced with eloquent simplicity by Lincoln himself--the record of Lincoln's policies in selected areas.

The enormous responsibilities that rested on him in guiding the destinies of his people through a difficult war, must, of course, be given due weight. The realities that a practical politician has to face also deserve appropriate consideration. Nonetheless the question needs to be posed as to where exactly Lincoln stood in regard to some of the significant social and economic issues of his times. What kind of vision, if any, did he have of the kind of society he wished to see evolving in the United States. The answers to such an enquiry may provide some clues as to whether Lincoln was simply a great wartime chieftain or whether he is entitled to be classed among mighty leaders of world stature whose actions had significant impact in advancing human society.

Chapter II

EVOLUTION OF LINCOLN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SLAVERY AND THE NEGROES

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The Lincoln legend has come to have a hold on the American imagination that defies comparison with anything else in political mythology. Here is a drama in which a great man shoulders the torment and moral blunders of a blundering and sinful people, suffers for them, and redeems them with the hallowed Christian virtues - 'malice towards none and charity for all' - and is destroyed at the pitch of his success. 1

The Abe Lincoln of folklore tradition has ceased to be a historical being. He is shown overwhelmingly as super-human and beyond the reach of human follies and even virtues. Yet, Abraham Lincoln endures and emerges through objective historical scholarship as a supreme politician and skilful leader of a nation in a crisis.

Lincoln was a politician by preference and training. His entire adult life was fully absorbed by politics. His career, except for a brief period between 1849 and 1854, when political unpopularity forced him into temporary retirement, was completely devoted to "caucuses and conventions, party circulars and speeches, requests, recommendations, strategems, schemes and ambition."²

A basic problem to be faced by any student of Lincoln's thought and his response to social and economic problems of his times is how to differentiate between his deeply felt and genuine

1 Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York, 1961), p. 93.

2 Ibid., p. 96.

convictions regarding certain issues from the necessary equivocations and circumlocutions of a professional politician. It is necessary, therefore, to view his beliefs and expressions in the perspective of the life and times of a politician in that age. This was the perspective which displayed a marked alteration in form and content in the years 1830 to 1860, by transformations that were unmatched in American history till that time.

Lincoln's own early life was perhaps quite typical of many Americans of the era. Born in the slave-holding state of Kentucky in 1809, he moved north-wards to Indiana. His parents were not slave owners and perhaps the economics of a poor white in a slave owing economy forced the shift.

Lincoln's formative years were spent in Indiana. Originally a part of the North-west territory from which slavery had been barred, it lay in the path of the westward shift of the center of population in the United States.³ Though there were only a few Negroes there, the problem of slavery was widely discussed. Periodically, proposals to prohibit Negro immigration came up before the legislature.

In March 1830, Lincoln struck out on his own, settling down at New Salem some twenty miles south of Springfield in Illinois. During the next six years he worked as store clerk, store-merchant, post-master and land surveyor. As early as 1832,

3 See Map, "Centers of Population of the US, 1790-1950", T. Harry Williams et al, History of the United States to 1876 (New York, 1963), p. 515.

at the age of 23, Lincoln ran for the state legislature but was defeated. In 1834 he was elected to the legislature and served till 1841. At the age of 28, Lincoln was the leader of the Whig Party in the Illinois House of Representatives. He was put up by his party as Speaker for the House, but was not elected. In 1840 and 1844, as a loyal Whig, he was placed in the Harrison and Clay electoral ticket and put in tremendous work during the campaigns. In 1846 he was elected to the House of Representatives from the seventh Congressional District of Illinois.

The chronological description of his career is necessary to underline the view that Lincoln was, first and foremost, a professional politician and, it seems, a precocious and ambitious one. He was a party loyalist. On various issues of national debate, in Congress and outside he scrupulously followed the orthodox Whig line.

He was an admirer of Henry Clay and the principles of Whiggery that the Great Compromiser championed--internal improvements, tariffs, and the National Bank. Clay's fervent nationalism was a source of inspiration to the ambitious Illinois politician. Like Clay, Lincoln showed a keen talent for political bargaining, as for instance, in the meetings with another rising political figure of the rival party, Stephen A. Douglas, that finally gave shape to the bill on internal improvements.⁴ Lincoln was one of the signatories to a campaign circular issued by the

4 Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years (New York, 1965), pp. 95-96.

Illinois Whig Committee which espoused the cause of tariff "so adjusted as to protect American industry". It advocated the necessity of a National Bank and supported Clay's proposal on the sale of public lands.⁵

Given Lincoln's background, his decision to align himself with the Whigs was significant. The Whigs were the party of privilege. In a letter to the editor of the Sangamo Journal at the time when he first stood for election in 1832, he noted:

I go for all sharing the privileges of the government, who assist in sharing its burthens. Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the rights of suffrage, who pay taxes or bear arms.... 6

The Illinois Constitution had already granted suffrage to all white males above the age of twenty-one without qualification, but young Abe Lincoln would favour its restriction to whites "who pay taxes or bear arms". He was, thus, by no means a radical --wild eyed or otherwise. His record was that of a "moderate conservative".⁷

Lincoln did not believe that the free Negro should have the right to vote. In fact, as it will be shown, he was convinced that it would be good for America and good for the Negroes if the Negroes would go away somewhere. His "beau ideal" of a statesman

5 Roy P. Basler et al, eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953), vol. II, pp. 309-18. Hereinafter referred to as Collected Works.

6 Collected Works, vol. I, p. 48.

7 Hofstadter, n. 1, p. 101.

was Henry Clay, who was a founder member of the American Colonization Society. The philosophy of the Society was that the "solution" to the Negro problem lay in gradual emancipation and deportation of Negroes to self-governing colonies in Africa. While it accepted the innate capacity of the Negro to govern himself, it preferred him to display his capabilities, in the area of self-government, at a respectable distance from the United States.

While believing itself to be motivated by the utmost benevolence to the Negro, it espoused an approach that rested on a racist preference for ridding America of Negroes by non-violent means. The advocates of deportation claimed that this course would save the Negroes from the deep-rooted race-prejudice of those Americans, especially Southerners, who believed in the perpetuation of slavery.

In his attitude on the issue of "colonization", too, Lincoln took his cue from Clay. He was as George M. Frederickson points out, willing to recognize the Negro "as a man but not a brother". Comments Frederickson: "These basic views of Clay were to be reaffirmed by Lincoln, who absorbed not only the doctrines but even some of the terminology of his precursor. In his fundamental attitude towards slavery and race Lincoln remained, apparently to the end of his career, a Henry Clay-type Whig colonizationist...."⁸

⁸ George M. Frederickson, "A Man But Not A Brother: Abraham

Some idea of Lincoln's views on the reform agitations of the times can be obtained from his "Lyceum Address" of 27 January 1838, and his address to the Washington Temperance Society on 22 February 1842. The Lyceum address was delivered some three months after murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy, the abolitionist editor of Alton, Illinois. In a "carefully written" speech on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions", Lincoln's theme was the danger involved in men overriding law and legal procedure. The speech indicated a conservative respect for public opinion and little regard for the moral basis of the questions involved. Condemning the growth of mobocracy, Lincoln asserted: "Alike, they spring up among the pleasure hunting masters of southern slaves, and the order loving citizens of the land of steady habits [⁹New England].".

He made no specific reference to Lovejoy, but referred to acts of violence by mobs who "throw printing presses into the river, shoot editors...." He emphasized that "there is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law". But he made no clear moral differentiation between abolitionists who fervently pleaded their cause and anti-abolitionists who resorted to violence. As far as he was concerned, "passion" could have bad consequences. "Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It

Lincoln and Racial Equality", Journal of Southern History (New Orleans), vol. XLI, no. 1, February 1975, pp. 43-44.

9 Collected Works, vol. I, p. 115.

will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence."¹⁰

Without that kind of passion, how were the grave evils of society to be combated? It was "cold, calculating unpassioned reason" that led Lincoln to espouse the cause of getting Negroes to remove themselves voluntarily from America. That, it seems, was his way of ensuring "our support and defence".

Lincoln's support for the Temperance Movement, particularly his speech to the Washington Temperance Society stemmed from his belief in the objectives of the movement as well as his appreciation of the political thrust evidenced by Temperance groups. There was also an undercurrent of his acceptance of a belief, itself a product of the reform impulse, that men were essentially perfectable, that there was no burden of original sin¹¹ that strove to maintain men in sin.

To Lincoln, the reform impulse sprang from the Declaration of Independence itself and was embodied in the Constitution. The idea of perfectionism was to take Garrison and other reformers to question the Constitution itself. It took politicians like Seward to look to a "Higher Law". To Lincoln, however, the danger in such ideas stood out more sharply than the content of the movements themselves. He strove to maintain the system,

10 Ibid., vol. I, p. 115.

11 Ibid., p. 279.

essentially perfectable in his opinion, in step with what he considered were the unique gifts of the Founders of the American Republic.

Given this background, Lincoln's views on slavery and abolitionism at this time becomes clear from his record as a legislator. While not seeking to disturb what apparently was not prohibited by the Constitution, Lincoln showed himself to be no defender of slavery. While morally his posture appeared to be unexceptionable, it had no content of positive action looking towards a free and equal position for all without distinction of race in the United States.

In January 1837, as Benjamin Quarles points out, he was one of the six members of the lower house, out of eighty-three casting ballots, who voted against a resolution affirming "the sacred right of owning slave property", and accepting that the Federal Government had no authority to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.¹²

Dan Stone, a Whig Lawyer from Springfield, and Lincoln, some seven weeks after they had ensured the transfer of the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield, put forward their protest in the form of a resolution. Their resolution stated that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy...." However, the two legislators underlined that

12 Benjamin Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro (New York, 1962), p. 19.

"abolition doctrines tend[s] rather to increase than to abate its evils". They agreed that Congress had no power to legislate on slavery in different states, but insisted that it had the right to do so in the District of Columbia.¹³

This protest marked the only instance of Lincoln's declaring his anti-slavery views in the state legislature. His view-point, was uncompromisingly moderate. Hofstadter says that "it did represent a point of view faintly to the left of prevailing opinions".¹⁴ By "prevailing opinion" Hofstadter obviously has in mind the opinion--or prejudice--among a stable segment of white voters. It was undoubtedly an "opinion" that a shrewd and ambitious politician with an eye on the main chance would voice--the politician "with a conscience" who nonetheless exalts "reason" over "passion". It was certainly not the view of several other men of "conscience" with no political axes to grind. Their struggle for abolition of slavery, Lincoln was willing to proclaim, increased rather than abated the evils of slavery.

On a visit to Kentucky in 1841, Lincoln saw some slaves at work. In a letter to a friend, Mary Speed, in September 1841, he spoke of them as "...a fine example...for contemplating the effect of condition upon human happiness." He described the details of the behaviour of slaves as they were chained together

13 Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 74-75.

14 Richard Hofstadter, n. 1, p. 109.

and reflected that "they were being separated forever from scenes from their childhood, their friends, their fathers... and many of them, from their wives and children...." Yet, they appeared to be cheerful. His observations were human but there was also something missing. Were the slaves to be left in their state of "cheerfulness"? Did anything have to be done to remove their "adversity"? Lincoln would do no more than wait for slavery to end, somehow, and at some future time. ¹⁵

In October 1845, he wrote a letter to Williamson Durley, an abolitionist supporter of his:

I hold it to be a paramount duty of us in the free states, due to the Union of the States, and perhaps to liberty itself (paradox though it may seem) to let the slavery of the other states alone; while on the other hand, I hold it to be equally clear, that we should never knowingly lend ourselves directly or indirectly, to prevent that slavery from dying a natural death.... ¹⁶

These were the views Lincoln essentially held to the end of his ¹⁷ life. That he was compelled to undertake a war out of which was forced the Emancipation Proclamation did not negate his earlier thinking on the issue. True to his firm belief, the

15 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 260.

16 Ibid., p. 348.

17 In an autobiographically written sketch in June 1860 before the Presidential election, he referred to the protest resolution in the Illinois legislature, noting that it... "defined his position on the slavery question; and so far as it goes, it was then the same that it is now". Ibid., vol. IV, p. 65.

belief of the Founding Fathers, he tried honestly to follow it in policy. Yet, the forces that were shaping up in these years were either inadequately perceived, or underrated by him. These were the trends, interrelated, that led to the hardening anti-slavery and pro-slavery views in the 1850's, culminating in war.

The war with Mexico resulted in the annexation of large chunks of territory in the South-west of United States. Previously in 1845 Texas had been annexed. The annexation of territory in the south rekindled the sectional controversy. Lincoln, along with the Whigs had opposed the war. In 1846, when President Polk had asked for \$2,000,000 to purchase the territory, David Wilmot an anti-slavery Democrat from Pennsylvania had introduced an amendment that slavery should be prohibited in any territory secured from Mexico. This Wilmot Proviso passed the House but failed in the Senate. It cut across party lines and indicated the development of a sectional stand regarding the expansion of slavery. It began the process of splitting the Democrats and the Whigs.

Lincoln served the Thirtieth Congress of United States as a Congressman from Illinois between 1847 and 1849. In the election of 1848, Lincoln backed the nomination of Zachary Taylor against that of his mentor Henry Clay.¹⁸ Taylor, a slave-holding moderate Whig from Louisiana, won the Presidential

18 Donald W. Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln (Urbana, 1957), pp. 128-31.

election of that year. The Democrats put forward Lewis Cass who supported "squatter sovereignty" but chose to remain vague regarding slavery. The two candidates were too much for anti-slavery men to swallow. In August 1848, the Free Soil Party came into being. Its convention supported the Wilmot Proviso and declared for free homesteads and higher tariffs. The coalescence of anti-slavery feelings with the economic aspirations of Northern industry and agriculture was fraught with significance for the future.

In the first session of the Thirtieth Congress the slavery issue came before the House several times. Lincoln was consistent in his attitude towards Congress calling upon the House to receive and discuss anti-slavery petitions. Thus, on 27 December 1847, he voted against tabling a petition from the "citizens of the District of Columbia" calling for the abolition of the slave trade in their District. A week later a similar petition from Indiana was placed on the table, Lincoln voted against tabling it.¹⁹ In other similar such occasions Lincoln took the stand, similar to that of John Quincy Adams, that the citizens had a right to petition their representatives and that the legislators had a duty to receive and consider the petitions.

This did not mean, either in the case of John Quincy Adams or Lincoln, that they believed that Congress could legislate against slavery. On May 29, 1848, Amos Tuck asked "unanimous consent" in the House to introduce a resolution which directed

19 Ibid., p. 162.

the committees to which the anti-slavery petitions had been referred, to report a bill. He moved to suspend the rules in order to get the resolution before the House. On this motion, the House divided clearly on a pro-slavery and anti-slavery basis. The pro-slavery combination of Whigs, and Democrats from the South as well as from the North, voted down the motion calling for suspension of rules to consider the resolution. Riddle notes, "Lincoln was one of the majority voting against consent to introduce the resolution".²⁰ Lincoln himself presented one solitary anti-slavery petition to the House on 28 February 1849. It was a petition by J.M. Sturtevant and others of Morgan County, Illinois to abolish slave trade in the District of Columbia. "This solitary instance", as Donald Riddle notes, "contrasts strongly with the activity of the militant anti-slavery men" like Palfrey, Tuck and Joshua Giddings.²¹

When an acrimonious debate took place in the House stemming from an incident in which some eighty slaves had been freed and then recaptured in Washington, Lincoln voted in favour of tabling a motion of protest thus shutting out action by the House. In another discussion on an incident in which a Negro waiter had been seized by three slave traders, Lincoln remained silent. He, however, voted against tabling the motion brought up out of this issue by Joshua Giddings calling for the ending of slave trade in

20 Riddle, n. 18, p. 163.

21 Ibid.

22

the District or shifting the nation's capital elsewhere. In the case of another resolution calling for a committee to report a bill for the abolition of slave-trade in the District of Columbia, Lincoln voted against the adoption of the motion. In a protracted debate, Lincoln followed the principle by which "he consistently voted to receive anti-slavery petitions [but] he opposed the passage of a bill which would have enabled an expression of opinion".²³ When a motion to reconsider was subsequently brought up Lincoln entered the debate with his own amendment to the resolution, which was, in effect, a resolution in itself.

Lincoln's resolution was proposed as a "bill for an act to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, by the consent of the free white people of the said District, and with compensation to owners". This bill excepted officers of the government coming from the slave states from its operation. It provided that children born of slave mothers after 1 January 1850, should be freed and supported by their mothers' owners till a certain age. Owners of slaves in the District could emancipate their slaves and receive compensation. Section 5 of the bill empowered the municipal authorities of Washington and Georgetown "to provide active and efficient means to arrest, and deliver up to their owners, all slaves escaping into the said District."²⁴ The bill

22 Ibid., pp. 164-66.

23 Ibid., pp. 166-69.

24 See Ibid., p. 169; Collected Works, vol. II, p. 20n, p. 21.

itself was not passed, but it sparked a debate on the morality of slavery. Lincoln himself did not press the bill too hard in Congress.

Between the first and second sessions of the Thirtieth Congress, Lincoln visited Massachusetts. In Worcester on 12 September 1848, he spoke as a Whig loyalist canvassing for General Taylor, the Whig presidential candidate. It was at a time when the influence of the Free Soil Party was increasing in the North. According to the Boston Daily Advertiser, Lincoln declared that "slavery was an evil, but that we were not responsible for it and cannot affect it in the states of this Union where we do not live". Lincoln added, however, "that extension of slavery to new territories of this country, is a part of our responsibility and care, and is under our control." He affirmed that Whigs were as strong if not stronger than Free Soilers in their adherence to the idea of preventing the extension of slavery.²⁵ On the same evening he met William Henry Seward, the anti-slavery politician from New York. As recorded by Frederick W. Seward in his biography of his father, Lincoln said:

Governor Seward, I have been thinking of what you said in your speech. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give

25 Collected Works, vol. II. Speech as reported by the Boston Daily Advertiser, 14 September 1848, pp. 1-4. See also Speech at Taunton, Mass., pp. 6-10 and Speech at Lacon, Ill., p. 14.

much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing. 26

It is possible that Lincoln was affected by the upsurge in the North at this time, but he chose to chide the people there for "so constantly thinking about it [slavery]". His own posture in public was one of virtual silence and inaction. In assessing his role regarding the issue of slavery, Riddle states that "...the most conspicuous feature of Congressman Lincoln's course with reference to slavery is his discreet silence."²⁷

In the first session of the Congress in 1847, the slavery issue evoked no less than 36 speeches both for and against slavery. Not one of them came from Lincoln. This contrasted sharply with the record of John Wentworth, who was to emerge as his chief rival for the Senatorial nomination in 1857-1858.²⁸

Lincoln finished his term in Congress in March 1849. He did not seek re-election, and indeed, stood a slim chance of winning. This was due to his unpopular stand on the Mexican War. Between this period, and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, Lincoln was comparatively inactive politically. In retrospect it is clear that he was only biding his time; as Herndon said, "his ambition was an engine that knew no rest".

The sectional split discernible in the support for the

26 Cited by Riddle, n. 18, p. 137.

27 Ibid., p. 179.

28 Ibid.

Wilmot Proviso, now began to cut across party lines. "When the new Congress assembled early in December 1849, sectional controversy was at a white heat"²⁹. It was only by the exertions of the old time statesmen, Clay and Webster, that a Compromise was proposed and passed by September 1850.

The Compromise of 1850 never quite contained the rising tide of sectional conflict. The assumptions of its proponents were, in the ultimate analysis, incorrect. What had become more important were the beliefs that had come to take hold of the public opinion in the North and the South and the emotions that they unleashed. To people in both sections, the other seemed to be expansionist, bent on wiping out the fundamental premises of its society. The Compromise really postponed the decision on the fundamental issues and did little more.

It was the problem created by the new Fugitive Slave Law that kept the issue of slavery foremost in the minds of Northerners in the years following the Compromise. Seward, Salmon P. Chase and Charles Sumner, the new breed of anti-slavery politicians, denounced the Compromise as "radically wrong and essentially vicious". They were especially violent in their denunciation of the Fugitive Slave Law. They asserted that it denied any legal right for a runaway to defend himself and that it was often used against free Negroes. For the abolitionists the Act

29 Avery Craven, The Coming of the Civil War (New York, 1942), p. 243.

was a veritable declaration of war by "slavocracy". For the free Negroes and for runaways who had been unmolested for years, it brought on a deepening fear. "Within fifteen days after Fillmore signed the bill, over three hundred Negroes left Pittsburgh... In Columbia...the Negro population fell from 943 to 487.... During the ten years following the passage of the bill, from 15,000 to 20,000 Negroes crossed into Canada".³⁰

The practice of this law, compulsorily enforced by federal officials brought home to politically conscious Northerners, the essentially anti-democratic premises of slavery.

In Lincoln's writings and speeches we do not find any condemnation of the Fugitive Slave Act. Perhaps, as an orthodox Whig he felt compelled to defend the essential principles of the Compromise as enunciated by Henry Clay? That, however, could not be the explanation. The truth was that Lincoln accepted the philosophy of the law, and as may be recalled, had actually incorporated it in the amendment he had introduced in the House of Representatives. A report of his speech at Carrollton, Illinois carried by the Illinois State Register on 1 September 1854, indicates that he defended the Compromise of 1850 including the Fugitive Slave Law.³¹ This was after the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska bill in January that year and its passage

30 Quarles, n. 12, p. 49.

31 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 227.

in May.

Despite the storm that had erupted following the bill's introduction, Lincoln seemed unable to grasp the moral issue involved in the controversy as viewed by the North and the West. In a speech at Bloomington on 12 September 1854, Lincoln again defended the Compromise and by implication, if not more, the Fugitive Slave provisions. For Lincoln, the problem was one of principle that was involved in a compromise; it bound on both parties to maintain it in good faith. In the Bloomington speech as well as one in Springfield on 4 October, Lincoln concentrated his attack on the Kansas-Nebraska Act and gave no indication of the moral repugnance that was sweeping through the North at the time.³² But in line with the views that he had voiced even earlier, he was ready to oppose extension of slavery into the Territories. Thus if his objective of preventing the extension of slavery into the Territories was conceded, Lincoln was not only willing to stomach the Fugitive Slave Act but to grant Southerners "any legislation to reclaim their fugitives". The moral defensibility of his position is questionable, to say the least. But Lincoln was not concerned so much with the issue of moral defensibility as with political realities. On 16 October 1854, he declared at Peoria: "I would give them [the South] any legislation to reclaim their fugitives, which should not, in its stringency, be more likely to carry a free man into

32 Ibid., pp. 233-47, p. 233n.

slavery...."³³ As late as June 1859, Lincoln wrote to Chase requesting him to reconsider a plank adopted by the Republican state convention in Ohio calling for a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. He expressed his fears as to the damage it would cause to the Republican cause. "I have no doubt", he noted, "that if that plank be even introduced into the next Republican National Convention, it will explode it".³⁴

In a letter to Joshua Speed on 24 August 1855, Lincoln wrote "I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils, but I bite my lip and keep quiet". Lincoln indicated that his duties as a politician given to upholding the Constitution precluded any premature stand on a merely moral basis. He went on to remind Speed of a trip they had taken together in 1841 when they had seen some slaves shackled together. "That sight was a continual torment to me", noted Lincoln.³⁵ But in the letter to Mary Speed in September 1841, mentioned earlier, in which Lincoln had described the incident in detail, he had given no evidence of such "torment".

The furor over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, piloted by Stephen A. Douglas, which involved the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the introduction of the principle of "popular

33 Ibid., p. 256.

34 Ibid., vol. III, p. 384.

35 Ibid., vol. II, p. 320.

sovereignty" whereby each Territory could accept or reject slavery, mounted in intensity. Douglas never consciously desired to legislate the extension of slave power, yet his political opponents in the North accused him of that. His own party split sectionally, one-half supporting and the other opposing the measure. The support extended to the bill by the South made it a sectional measure. It destroyed the Whigs in the South and increased Southern influence in the Democratic Party. The Act was responsible for calling into being a new party that was frankly sectional in composition and ideology--the Republican Party. Its growth was sensational. In the election of 1854, the Republicans along with Know-Nothings won control of a number of state governments. While during its early growth the Party projected itself essentially as committed to opposing the extension of slavery, its real strength derived from the support of the Northern capitalists desiring high tariffs, and the working people looking for free homesteads along with the exclusion of competition from degrading slave labour.

Lincoln took the high road for Presidency at this period. "His strategy was simple and forceful. He carefully avoided issues like the tariff, internal improvements, the Know-Nothing mania, or prohibitionism, each of which would alienate important groups of voters. He took pains in all his speeches to stress that he was not an abolitionist and at the same time to stand on

the sole program of opposing the extension of slavery. On October 4, 1854, at the age of forty-five, Lincoln for the first time in his life denounced slavery in public".³⁶ This speech, delivered also at Peoria on 16 October, has become famous as an exposition of Lincoln's views on the issue of slavery. Before Lincoln spoke, Stephen A. Douglas had delivered an address in which he had defended the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the concept of "popular sovereignty".

The Peoria speech marked a qualitative shift in Lincoln's view on slavery. In the speech, he indicated his depth of knowledge regarding the question and his careful analysis of the issues obtaining from it. He, however, emphasized the distinction between his views on the existing institution and the extension of it. He outlined the history of the Missouri Compromise and its necessity and principle. Similarly he noted that the Compromise of 1850 involved a certain give and take, essential for the unity of the nation. With this in perspective, he denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act which entailed "letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska...[and] allowing it to spread to every other part of the world...." He condemned the "declared indifference" that Douglas indicated toward the slave question. He, however, saw it as "covert real zeal for the spread of slavery". He declared, "I hate it because of the monstrous

36 Hofstadter, n. 1, p. 110.

injustice of slavery itself". He denied that he had any prejudice against the people of the South. He accepted the fact that it would be difficult to get rid of the institution "in any satisfactory way". His own impulse, had he the power, "would be to free all slaves, and send them to Liberia...." If that were not feasible then the only alternative might be to free the Negroes and "make them politically and socially, our equals...." But that, however, was a prospect that appalled Abraham Lincoln.

My own feelings will not admit of this;
and if mine would, we well know that
those of the great mass of white people
will not... A universal feeling, whether
well or ill-founded, cannot be safely
disregarded. We cannot then make them
equals. 37

Hofstadter contends that the abolitionist and humanitarian anti-slavery men in the North-west held the balance of power, at that period, but not the independent strength to force the issue politically.³⁸ It is clear that most North-western states were as much seized of the fear of being confronted by a racial problem. Most free states had stringent laws against free Negroes. Francis Harper, an abolitionist lecturer, moaned "We turn to the free North, but even here oppression tracks us. Indiana shuts her doors to us. Illinois denies us admission to her prairie homes...."³⁹

37 Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 247-56.

38 Hofstadter, n. 1, pp. 111-12.

39 Cited by Quarles, n. 12, p. 55.

Lincoln chose to assume a political stance midway between the position of abolitionists and pro-slavery men. He believed that this posture was politically the most appropriate and desirable one for him.

Lincoln carefully calculated the moral impact of the question of slavery and the aspirations of Northern labour, both agricultural and industrial, towards the Territories.

We want them [the Territories] for the homes of free white people... New free states are the places for poor people to go to and better their conditions.... 41

With this in view, the main thrust of Lincoln's arguments in this period developed towards opposing the extension of slavery beyond the line of the Missouri Compromise. Towards this, he stated that even climate would not keep out slavery, if the principle of the Missouri Compromise involving the peaceful extinction of slavery was violated. Lincoln sensed the growing fear of the North that the extension of slavery was, in itself, a threat to their freedom and that continued controversy might endanger the Union. And Lincoln the nationalist, stressed the overriding importance of preserving the Union. "Much as I hate slavery, I would consent

40 Thus, a letter from a fellow Whig from Peoria noted: "I understand you to be opposed to the extension of slavery into Territory now free. I would expect you to maintain this position". He requested Lincoln not to go beyond supporting the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. See David C. Mearns, The Lincoln Papers: The Story of the Collection with Selections to 4 July 1861 (New York, Doubleday & Co., 1948), pp. 195-96.

41 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 268.

to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved", he declared. This was the line of thinking he maintained even during the war years. His stand, eminently suitable for the developing situation in North, was: "Stand WITH the abolitionist in restoring the Missouri Compromise; and stand AGAINST him when he attempts to repeal the fugitive slave law." Yet viewing the great upsurge against slavery, he drew one cardinal lesson which reiterated towards the end of this speech that "...[This feeling] cannot be trifled with. It is a great and durable element of popular action, and, I think, no statesman can safely disregard it".⁴² Lincoln the statesman was now emerging. He was at grips with the problem of slavery. His preoccupation with matter can be seen by two draft notes which indicate the way he developed his views. In one, he noted:

If A can prove, however, conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B - why may not B snatch the same argument, and prove equally, that he may enslave A? -

You say A is white, and B is black. It is color then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? ... By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.... 43

Immediately after his Peoria oration, abolitionists such as Owen Lovejoy and Ichabod Coddington tried to get him into a

42 Ibid., pp. 266-82. (Emphasis added)

43 Ibid.; "Fragment on Slavery", (1 July 1854), pp. 222-23.

strongly anti-slavery "Republican Party" embryo they were trying to organize. He noted to Coddington, who invited him to join a convention in Chicago. "I suppose my opposition to the principle of slavery is as strong as that of any member of the Republican Party; but I had also supposed that the extent to which I feel authorized to carry that opposition, practically; was not at all satisfactory to that party...."⁴⁴

Don E. Fehrenbacher contends that Lincoln was not unreasonable at this stage to hope that the "party of Henry Clay would become the rallying point for a grand move to restore the Missouri Compromise...."⁴⁵ Yet, Lincoln was politically mature enough to sense the direction in which the winds were blowing. He entered the campaign of 1854 as a Whig and, Anti-Nebraska remained his single plank.⁴⁶ Though he was easily elected to the State legislature, he failed in his attempt to gain the Senatorial seat from Illinois in 1855. "Throughout 1855", as Luthin points out, "Lincoln remained in his ever declining Whig Party. He feared to enter the new anti-slavery Republican Party... [he was] moderate in his views against slavery, and cautious to the point of opportunism where his political career figured".⁴⁷ He indicated his slow shift towards the Republicans when he stated to

44 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 288.

45 Don E. Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness (Stanford, 1962), p. 25.

46 Hofstadter, n. 1, p. 109.

47 Reinhard H. Luthin, The Real Abraham Lincoln (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1960), p. 180.

Owen Lovejoy, "I have no objection to "fuse" with anybody provided I can fuse on grounds which I think is right...."⁴⁸

In a letter to Joshua Speed on 24 August 1855, Lincoln gave further indication that a change of party might not be distant. "I think I am a whig; but others say I am an abolitionist... I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery", he wrote.

Lincoln went over to the Republican Party early in February 1856, after attending a convention of anti-Nebraska editors in Dectaur. This convention passed a resolution against the Kansas-Nebraska Act and against Know-Nothingism. On 29 May 1855, a state Republican Convention was held at Bloomington, Ill., which adopted resolutions "most moderate in their expression of anti-slavery views...." Lincoln was at last satisfactorily "fused" to a new political combination. The year 1855 was a grim portent of the coming sectional struggle. In May, while pro-slavery elements "sacked" the town of Lawrence, abolitionists retaliated by the Pottawatomie "massacre" in Kansas. In the Senate, Congressman Preston Brooks assaulted Senator Charles Sumner, thus, "providing a martyr for the new political party".⁵⁰

In the 1856 Presidential campaign Lincoln once again behaved like a good partyhorse and canvassed actively for John

48 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 316.

49 Ibid., pp. 320-23.

50 Ibid., pp. 333-41; Luthin, n. 47, p. 183.

C. Fremont, the Republican candidate. He himself had backed an "ultra-conservative Whig", John Mclean, for the nomination. His active interest in the campaign brought him to the fore as the leading Republican of Illinois, barring perhaps, Senator Lyman Trumbull. This was the factor that led to his receiving the Senatorial nomination from the Republican Party to fight against Stephen A. Douglas, the pre-eminent Democratic figure not only in Illinois, but in the country.

The Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court in March 1857, which ruled that a Negro was not a citizen, and that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, further widened the sectional rift and gave Lincoln an opportunity to attack Douglas and the Democrats. For the Republicans, the Dred Scott case was a major rallying point. They could now appear to substantiate their contentions regarding the aggressive slave-power spreading its tentacles from Congress to the President and even to the Supreme Court.

In a speech in Springfield on 12 June 1857, Douglas hailed the decision as a vindication of "popular sovereignty". He indicated that while the decision eliminated Congressional legislation, it left the Territories free to choose between making slavery possible or impossible by the media of local legislation. He attacked the Republican stand and stated that emancipation and political equality was bound to lead to full social equality. Such an eventuality would be against the aims of the Founding

Fathers who, Douglas felt, sought to make the United States a
 51
 white man's country.

Lincoln heard this speech and delivered a carefully thought out rebuttal, which was equally partisan in content, on 26 June 1857. He declared that the Dred Scott decision was "erroneous", but his party would attempt to reverse it only peacefully. He did not speak much on "popular sovereignty" but insisted that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution contained within their framework an opposition to the institution of slavery. He insisted that miscegnation was a result of slavery and not emancipation. The way to prevent "amalgamation" of races was to keep the races separated. He contended:

A separation of races is the only perfect preventive of amalgamation but as an immediate separation is impossible the next best thing is to keep them apart where they are not already together.... I can say a very large proportion of its [Republican Party] members are for it, and that the chief plank in their platform--opposition to the spread of slavery--is most favourable to that separation. 52

Lincoln was making his appeal to an audience as yet unclear as to its stand on slavery. Nevertheless, despite its anti-Negro attitude, other sectional issues were compelling it to view the slavery issue.

Lincoln moved subtly, he projected his view as one

51 Gerald M. Capers, Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union (Boston, 1959), p. 153.

52 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 408.

supporting the natural rights of the Negroes without conceding them political and social rights. The Negro was a human being, not a brother--most certainly not a spouse. He emphasized earlier in the speech that freedom of the slave did not mean miscegnation as Douglas charged.

...because I do not want a black women for a slave I must [not] necessarily want her for a wife... I can just leave her alone. In some respects she is certainly not my equal; but in her natural rights, she is my equal, and the equal of all others. 53

Lincoln did not spell out what he meant by that high sounding phrase--equal natural rights. The only "right" that he implied was nothing more than the "right to be let alone"--which would be the "perfect solution" to the problem of "amalgamation" that Lincoln dreaded as much as Douglas. Lincoln's incapacity to accept the idea that the free Negro should be entitled, in a society, seeking to be just and democratic, to certain "inalienable rights", shows how far behind he was compared to the enlightened advocates of reform during this period.

By the time Lincoln had been declared the Republican nominee to fight Stephen A. Douglas for his Senatorial seat, the Democrats were in disarray. Douglas had broken with President James Buchanan over the Lecompton Constitution and the President had begun a purge of Douglas loyalists.⁵⁴

53 Ibid., p. 405.

54 See Gerald M. Capers, n. 51, pp. 138-62.

At the convention that nominated him as the Republican candidate against Douglas, Lincoln delivered what was "the most radical address on anti-slavery he was ever to utter in his life".⁵⁵

He had been projecting his views on slavery that summer, and was developing a Republican ideology to suit the party. The Republicans, he thought in May, believed that slavery was wrong and that "like every other wrong it ought to be prohibited by law".

At the convention on 16 September, he delivered his famous "House - Divided" speech. He was at the pinnacle of his ambition and he was aware of it. It was perhaps the emotion of the moment that led him to declare:

A house divided against itself cannot stand.
I believe this government cannot endure half slave and half free... I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it in a course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states.... Study the Dred Scott decision, and then see how little even now remains to be done....

He went on to insinuate that the Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Dred Scott decision were tied up to a plot between Douglas, Chief Justice Roger Taney, Buchanan and former President

55 Luthin, n. 47, p. 193.

Franklin B. Pierce. In the crisp hard hitting speech, he denounced all that Douglas stood for in the strongest terms concluding:

The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail - if we stand firm.... Wise Councils may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later victory is sure to come. 56

Lincoln had used hard words. Perhaps he regretted them, for he defended them subsequently against claims that these were abolitionist ideas. The content of his ideas indicate he was more than taken aback by his own words when he replied to John L. Scripps that he was "mortified" by the way his speech had been misconstrued. He reiterated his stand that he was not for interfering with slavery in the Slave States, and emphasized "by the language used I only meant...⁵⁷ [that]". He explained away the "House-Divided" doctrine repeatedly in his subsequent debates with Douglas. On 10 July 1858, in Chicago, he requested the audience to note the contents of that speech carefully. He noted that "...I did not say that I was in favor of anything in it. I only said what I expected would take place. I made a prediction only--it may have been a foolish one perhaps. I did not even say that I desired that slavery should be put in course of ultimate⁵⁸ extinction."

56 Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 468-69.

57 Ibid., p. 471.

58 Ibid., p. 491.

Lincoln had, notes Luthin "coined a quotable phrase"⁵⁹--
 "the House Divided", without really defining his position.
 Here was a counter to Seward's "Higher Law" idea, from a man who
 was, and remained, basically conservative on the slavery question.

The Senatorial contest in 1858 has become famous for the
 Lincoln-Douglas debates. These seven debates between July and
 October 1858, were a strategic victory for Lincoln who lost the
 election itself. They helped to make him a national figure and
 pushed him forward as the pre-eminent formulator and defender
 of the Republican ideology. Lincoln was, and still is, projected
 as a radical and indignant anti-slavery crusader. He was, in
 fact and underlined it so in his speeches, a moderate anti-
 slavery man, who, though opposed to Negro slavery extending
 itself to Territories, refused to commit himself to the task of
 eliminating slavery in the Slave States. Douglas, while support-
 ing the right of the Territories to decide on the issue of
 slavery themselves, never favoured or supported its extension
 anywhere.

In the famous debates with Douglas, we get a clearer
 picture of the stand that Lincoln had come to adopt vis-a-vis
 slavery and the Negroes. The stand was an highly ambivalent one.
 Douglas repeatedly pointed this out in his own speeches.

Lincoln's line of defence was to quote his Peoria speech
 where he had stated that his own feelings "would not admit" to

59 Luthin, n. 47, p. 193.

social and political equality for Negroes. But he made a big point of importance of regarding the Negro as a human beings with the same nature and feelings as other humans. He criticized Douglas for advocating a policy which would dehumanize the Negro, and "take away from him the right of striving to be a man" and of seeking to perpetuate the institution of slavery. His own position, despite the moral rhetoric in which his words were couched, were not too heartening. Speaking in Charleston on 18 September, he declared:

I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and the black races...while ...they remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. 60

This was, an explicit denial of political rights to the Negroes. Yet, while he took issue with Douglas for supporting the idea that any "community [wanting slavery]...have a right to have it", he himself agreed that such a power was vested in the Constitution of States. Further he agreed that while states may grant citizenship to the Negroes, he would be "opposed to the exercise of this power" by his own State, Illinois. 61

In the Freeport debate on 27 August, Lincoln flatly stated

60 Collected Works, vol. III, p. 145; see also pp. 16, 304.

61 Ibid., pp. 226, 179.

that he was not "pledged to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia", nor pledged to end slave trade between states. He was "impliedly, if not expressly, pledged to a belief in the right and duty of Congress" to prohibit slavery in the Territories. It seems that he was pledged to nothing personally. He was only "impliedly, if not expressly" shifting his "right" and "duty" to the Congress.

Lincoln's support for the Fugitive Slave Law, as has been remarked earlier, was perhaps, the most dismal right and duty he was pledged to. Lincoln once again quoted his "conservative" Peoria speech which only indicated his willingness, for reasons of immediate political advantage, to dissociate himself to some extent from that he had no role in the moral upsurge that shook the North following the passage of the stringent Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. His view was that since the South was entitled to the law constitutionally, they were welcome to it, but what he wanted was to free it of "some of the objections that pertain to it, without lessening its efficiency". The fact that he had advocated such a law when he was in Congress in 1848, indicates that he had no fundamental objection to it, and he was willing to make the working of the law more efficient. He stated that if elected to the Senate, he would support it as a duty, though it was "distasteful" to him, he would be "...a perjured man... [if he failed] to give such protection to that property as its nature needed".⁶²

62 Ibid., p. 41, p. 132; see also p. 317.

A closer reading of the stands that he took in the debates indicate that even his "firm" posture against the extension of slavery was shaky. Speaking at Freeport, he admitted that if a Territory, when adopting a Constitution, "did such an extraordinary thing as to adopt a slave Constitution...I see no alternative but to admit it into the Union". Taking a further step back he claimed, however, that the admission of a single slave state was not likely to establish a "universal slave nation".⁶³

The most remarkable fact that emerges from his stand on the Fugitive Slave Law, is its amorphousness. Nowhere does he even state that he would oppose let alone vote against any of these measures that were "distasteful" to him and which he was "bound" to stand by. On the other hand, he opposed the action of other, not so legal-minded souls, who would free Dred Scott even though the Court decision sanctioned his continued enslavement. He declared: "...when any one, or one thousand shall be decided by the Court to be slaves, we will [not] in any violent way disturb the rights of property thus settled."⁶⁴ Here we have a clear indication of the high importance that Lincoln attached to property rights even while they ran clearly counter to human rights.

Throughout the debates, Lincoln accused Douglas of being

63 Ibid., pp. 41, 73.

64 Ibid., p. 255. In Alton he declared that any Republican too "impatient" to settle the issue of slavery "is misplaced standing with us", p. 315.

indifferent to slavery. Yet, he had showed little positive thinking on this regard himself. Placing himself among those who sought to see that "wrong may have an end", he declared that when the self-evident truth of this wrong became evident to all, slavery would be in the course of "ultimate extinction". This circular logic, was, to say the least, a masterly example of evasiveness. He opposed all agitations to make this self-evident wrong evident to all. He castigated those who even sought to raise the issue; yet, he expected a moral revolution to descend, at some indefinite time, from somewhere.⁶⁵

He was careful not to even project his ideas on colonization and gradual emancipation too freely. He was not sure of its reception either by his abolitionist or anti-abolitionist constituencies. Thus, in Quincy, he referred to it, but dismissed it saying that he believed that the nation was not "very likely to soon agree with [it]."⁶⁶

In assessing the Lincoln-Douglas debates the present writer reached the conclusion that the content of the positions of both men were largely similar. Yet the form that manifested itself was markedly different. Thus Lincoln for all his accusations that Douglas was "blowing out the moral lights around us", does not himself appear to rate too high a position on the moral

65 Ibid., pp. 315-16.

66 Ibid., p. 255.

plane. To admit that slavery was wrong was surely no excuse for leaning backward to preserve it, even in a limited area, which was the position that Lincoln espoused repeatedly.

There was little difference between the "indifferent" Douglas' view that the Negro should have all "natural rights" consistent with the "safety of the society in which he lives", and Lincoln's support of the Fugitive Slave Law as a "fundamental right" of the South. Their views on race were identical, Lincoln took pains in his speeches to point out that he, too, believed that the American society was founded on a "white basis".

Lincoln argued at Quincy, that (1) the slavery issue "unfortunately" tended to aggravate the sectional controversy; (2) that it was "a social and political wrong"; and (3) that it sought to spread itself. It is clear in the light of his subsequent action that while he laid great stress on slavery as a cause of disunion, he failed to act too strongly on his second premise.⁶⁷

Richard Hofstadter says that Lincoln's mind too, was "a house divided against itself". The present writer is unable to accept this evaluation. Nor can the present writer accept wholly Hofstadter's evaluation that Lincoln put a premium⁶⁸ "on strategy and not in intellectual consistency". Of course, ambitious

67 Ibid., p. 255.

68 Hofstadter, n. 1, pp. 116-17.

and skilfull politician that he was, Lincoln never ignored the imperatives of electoral strategy. But there was no lack of intellectual consistency in his campaign speeches in 1858, as far as his own vision of the place of Blacks in the United States was concerned. Lincoln took great pains to prove his consistency--the line from Peoria to the White House was a consistent one as far as the issue of the Negro and slavery were concerned. Lincoln's vision was, by no means, a vision of positive steps in the direction of social, political, and economic equality.

At the center of the Republican ideology was the notion of "free-labor". "This concept", as Eric Foner points out, "involved not merely an attitude toward's work, but a justification of ante-bellum northern society...."⁶⁹ This attitude coupled with the dynamic economic progress of the North led Republican orators to launch withering criticism of Southern society and institutions. In the North, public opinion, had, with the help of abolitionist propaganda, come to view the South as a stagnant and decadent slave society. It was easy enough to project Northern institutions as progressive and term the defensive reaction of the South as "aggressiveness". The idea that free labour was degraded by slavery, and that the extension of

69 Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York, 1972), p. 9; also see Hofstadter, n. 1, pp. 118-19.

slavery into Territories would bar Northern labour from settling there because of the stigma attached to labour in a slave society, cemented the Northern labour in a firmly anti-slavery position, taken up by the Republican Party. As the standard-bearer of the Republican Party in 1860, Lincoln well represented this posture.⁷⁰

On the issue of the most appropriate solution to the Negro problem too--deportation--the nominee's position represented the view that had wide support in the Party. At the root of deportation philosophy was, of course, the idea espoused by Lincoln that the United States was or should be a nation for white men. It was Lincoln, proponent of this position, who had beaten out Seward and Chase for the Presidential nomination, since they were identified closely with abolitionist sentiment.⁷¹

70 See also Eric Foner, n. 69, p. 59. George W. Julian, a leading Republican supporter of the homestead principle wrote to Joshua Giddings, "Convince the laboring class that [slavery] is at war with our Republican institutions and opposed to their interests...." Eric Foner states that the idea that slavery degraded the white labour in the South and resulted in its economic stagnation, "was perhaps the major contribution of the political branch of the anti-slavery movement."

71 Collected Works, vol. III, pp. 16, 145. Thus, the strongest Republican proponents of deportation plans were Francis P. Blair and his sons Frank and Montgomery, anti-slavery slave-holders from Kentucky. The Blairs' even thought of these colonies set up in Central and South America as vehicles of an American Empire, where black Americans, carrying the American ideals would come to predominate. These "...rich colonies under our protection, [are] likely in the end, to appropriate the whole region to our use....", Francis Blair wrote to Martin Van Buren in 1860. Foner, n. 69, pp. 267-72.

The outline of Lincoln's speech to the Illinois Colonization Society in 1855, viewed the objectives of the society as, "...suppression of slave trade - commerce - civilization and religion". It also indicated that Lincoln had made a thorough study of the history of slavery in the United States.⁷²

It has been noted earlier that Lincoln did not stress his hopes for black expatriation in the 1858 Senatorial campaign. He was not ready then to commit himself clearly on that ground. Politician that he was, he had to calculate whether an emphasis on black deportation would help him at the polls. He had to adjust between the anti-Negro note as well as the quasi-abolitionist minority in Northern Illinois.⁷⁴

The movement for colonization picked up in the 1850's as the anti-slavery movement gained ground. Support came in from various state legislatures. In 1850, the Virginia Legislature set aside \$30,000 annually for five years to encourage emigration. In 1852 New Jersey Legislature voted \$1,000 for two years to help Liberia bound freedmen and increased the sum to \$4,000 in 1855. Pennsylvania followed the example by setting aside \$2,000. Maryland renewed its aid to colonization projects by appropriating \$10,000 a year, for six years.⁷⁴

72 Collected Works, vol. III, pp. 298-99.

73 See also Frederickson, n. 8, p. 50.

74 P.J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-65 (New York, 1961), p. 244.

Prominent politicians attended the annual meetings of the American Colonization Society. Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and President Millard A. Fillmore supported its work. The Dred Scott decision seemed to give the ultimate logic to the idea of deportation of Negroes. Lincoln, too, asserted in his Senatorial campaign against Douglas that he did not favour Negro citizenship.

The contradiction in assuming that Negroes could successfully govern themselves in colonies and not in the United States, was answered by the widely accepted belief that the white and the black races should live their lives in different climates. Lincoln had indulged in this fallacy when he stated in his Peoria speech that his first impulse would be to send the Negroes "to Liberia to their own native land". Subsequently he expressed his belief that "it is morally right, and, at the same time, favourable to, or, at least, not against our interests, to transfer the African on his own native clime."⁷⁵

The fact that deportation did not figure in official Republican ideology till 1860 was largely due to the resistance of free Negroes to the idea, and the failure of the Liberian venture. Within Republican ranks, influential "abolitionist" leaders such as Henry Wilson, Charles Sumner, William H. Seward, Thurlow Weed, Thaddeus Stevens, Salmon P. Chase, Joshua Giddings,

75 Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 255, 409.

Benjamin Wade and others were long time fighters and supporters of Negro rights both political and social. They were in principle opposed to any such idea and lent their weight against conservative colonizationists.⁷⁶

It is clear, however, that by 1860, a distinctive Republican position on the rights of Negroes had emerged. It may not have been acceptable to all the Republicans, given their heterogeneity, yet, it was the mainstream of Republican opinion. It involved, basically, the acceptance of "equal" rights of Negro labour to participate in the economic life of the nation. It did not, however, mean the acceptance of the principle of full legal and political rights as well. It was, in the opinion of Foner, represented, as in other things, by the stand of Lincoln. Lincoln opposed Negro suffrage and was an ardent supporter of deportation of free Negroes to be accompanied by gradual, compensated emancipation. Lincoln did insist, however, on making deportation voluntary. This was "a shaky consensus within the party"⁷⁷. Lincoln was very much aware of the balance of forces that existed in the North-west and the East at that time. He spent much time on welding together the heterogeneous elements into a compact party. As already mentioned, as late of 1859, he cautioned the Ohio state convention against a plank calling

76 Foner, n. 69, pp. 283-86.

77 Ibid., p. 294.

for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. He had felt that the introduction of this issue in the National Convention would be politically explosive and divisive.⁷⁸

In a letter to Schuyler Colfax of Indiana, he noted the need for unity in the platform that the Republicans would have to present in the Presidential elections. He advised all local conventions to avoid "everything which will distract Republicans elsewhere".⁷⁹ The final platform which was able to coalesce the Republicans behind Lincoln was, in no small measure, due to Lincoln's own efforts, and represented his views well.

This Foner ascribes to the fact that for the Republicans, the issue of slavery was linked inextricably with the idea of "free labor". Their affirmation of the natural rights of Negroes as enunciated by Lincoln in a speech at Springfield in 1857, was the "irreducible minimum". But the affirmation itself was vague and woolly. In a speech in Chicago in March 1859, Lincoln expressed these views with his usual penchant for high moral rhetoric and absence of concrete content.

...the profound central truth [of the Republican principle is] that slavery is wrong and ought to be dealt with as a wrong, though we are to always remember the fact of its actual existence amongst us and faithfully observe all the constitutional guarantees.... 80

78 Collected Works, vol. III, pp. 384-86.

79 Ibid., p. 391.

80 Foner, n. 69, pp. 299-300; also see Collected Works, vol. III, p. 368; vol. II, p. 405.

The 'fifties', were, for the Negroes, a decade of insecurity and tension. The growing sectional strife, with slavery as its stated cause, put them in a position of hope and despair. The growing anti-slavery temper of the North heightened their awareness of their position in the country, but the tightening of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott decision made the situation seem almost hopeless. The election of Abraham Lincoln brought some consolation. Lincoln was not the ideal candidate for the abolitionists or the Negroes. His views had been explicitly stated and they were in no way radical as those of even Seward or Chase. Yet, many abolitionists maintained close links with the Republicans, particularly the Radicals. They were hardly enthusiastic with the alternative posed by the Democrats.

Lincoln's narrow margin of victory made it clear that the election was not an anti-slavery triumph. There is little doubt that it was the split in the Democratic Party, the entry of the Constitutional Unionist Party into the fray and the Republican Party's commitment to high tariff, homestead and a pro-immigrant policy, that brought Lincoln the narrow margin of victory.

Benjamin Quarles notes that "...the four months' interval between Lincoln's election and his inauguration was for the Negro and his abolitionist supporters the most trying period in their stormy experience." The reaction of South Carolina's secession on 10 December 1860, touched off a series of attacks on abolitionists, a "record number" of their meetings were

violently attacked in Boston and in New York State. Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Vermont repealed "personal liberty laws" granting protection to runaways.⁸¹ All measures of compromise failed to appease the South and by the time of Lincoln's inaugural the die had already been cast by the secession of seven Southern states.

81 Quarles, n. 12, pp. 57-60.

Chapter III

THE TRAVAILS OF THE EMANCIPATOR

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Once war broke out, the entire problem of Negro emancipation took on a new colour. Lincoln, in his earlier political career, as we have seen, displayed a marked tendency to sidestep the entire issue of Negro slavery and the racial question. Lincoln, the President, showed a similar propensity. He projected his entire policy as one designed to preserve the Union, irrespective of any consideration for Negro emancipation. While he repeatedly stressed his belief that the slavery question had brought on the war, he acted in a way that would separate the slavery issue from the cardinal problem of preserving the Union. But, however, the war could not be fought successfully for so limited an objective. Now, more so than ever, the moral imperative that had been so important in the anti-slavery crusade had to be stressed to prosecute the war. Thus the soldiers went to war singing:

"John Brown's body lies a moldering
in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on...."

Lincoln opposed the Crittenden compromise. Though he was willing to maintain the fugitive slave laws, he expressed his inflexibility on the Territorial issue.¹ The prevention of the extension of slavery into the Territories, was, after all, the

1 Roy P. Basler et al, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953), vol. IV, pp. 149-54. Hereinafter referred to as Collected Works.

most important single plank that had helped the Republicans to win the election. Lincoln, however, failed to make any public speech or statement during this period between his election and inaugural, to clarify his views or to provide the much needed leadership at the time.

Lincoln's Inaugural speech was conciliatory towards the South. He quoted from his previous speeches indicating that he had no intention of interfering with slavery in the Slave States. He requested Congress to uphold its oath to support the Constitution and the laws, including its fugitive slave provisions. "The Republican Party", he declared, "...have avowed the purpose to prevent, if they can prevent the extension of slavery, under the national auspices; and upon this arises the only dispute between the sections." He declared that the fugitive slave laws were as well enforced, as was possible of laws "where the moral sense of the people" is against the law.

He went further to assuage the South by accepting an amendment recently passed by Congress which would guarantee "the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions." This amendment if fixed to the Constitution would have made slavery an integral part of the American political fabric and such was its explicit intention. Lincoln declared that this amendment would only be an explicit declaration of what was already implicitly accepted by the constitution. He declared that he had no objection "to its being made express and

irrevocable." Lincoln's primary object was to save the Union, the immediate goal was, as Hofstadter puts it, "to bring back the South with slavery intact".²

The surrender of Fort Sumter on 14 April 1861, decided the issue. Lincoln was now compelled to meet secession face to face. There could be no equivocations, especially with the rising fever gripping the North. Lincoln gave the call for 75,000 state militia men to defend the Union.

Negroes responded enthusiastically to Lincoln's call for volunteers. Meetings in Boston, Cleveland and New York convened by Negroes offered their services to the authorities, but nothing came of it. The attitude of the Lincoln Administration was to avoid, as far as possible, any indication that war was being waged to overthrow "established institutions" of the South.³ The stress was on the preservation of the Union. Lincoln viewed secession as a constitutional issue. The issue of Negro slavery was, however, tightly interlinked to sectionalism which had resulted in war. There was no escaping from it. As Quarles notes, "The North was willing to let the slave alone...would the slave let the North alone?"⁴

By the summer of 1861, the Republican Party itself, showed

2 Ibid., pp. 262-71. Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition, and The Men Who Made It (New York, 1961), p. 126.

3 Benjamin Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro (New York, 1962), pp. 66-68.

4 Ibid., p. 68.

a division between moderate and rival factions over slavery. Lincoln was, given his background, firmly moderate, wishing to see the end of slavery by gradual means, accompanied by compensation to the owners and deportation of freed Negroes to Central America and the West Indies. The difficulties of fighting a slave power without fighting the institution itself became apparent as the North struggled to organize itself to war.

"No sooner had the war begun than the slaves began to sift into the Union lines." These runaway Negroes or "contraband Negroes" created the first problem between the anti-slavery radicals and the moderates. Benjamin F. Butler, commanding Fortress Monroe, declared such runaways as "contraband of war" and put them to work on Union lines. Soon Butler's lines were flooded by such "contrabands", and by July, he was employing on advice from Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, some one thousand Negroes.

On 6 August 1861, Congress enacted a Confiscation Act which provided that the seizures of slave property were to be handled by Federal Courts and that only property used in aid of rebellion would come under the operation of the Act. Lincoln signed the Act reluctantly, yet, he had no policy of his own and this resulted in the field commanders taking initiative on the matter where they chose to do so.

5 Benjamin Quarles, n. 3, pp. 69-70. This Act was in response to a Confiscation Act passed by the Confederate Congress confiscating debts due to the North. See James G. Randall, Constitutional Problems under Lincoln (Urbana, 1951), p. 275.

On 17 July 1862, a more comprehensive Confiscation Act was passed. This Act was a "punitive measure directed against persons, taking their property by way of penalty...." It covered all those involved in "rebellion". The Act explicitly forbade the return of any fugitive slave, except for a crime, or to a Unionist owner. It is noteworthy that the right of a Unionist slave-owner to his property--the slave--was explicitly recognized even after the great crusade had begun.⁶ These Acts were the steps that paved the way towards the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Act of 17 July 1862, differentiated between slaves and property. It stated that all slaves of those involved in rebellion who had been captured or who had deserted "shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude...."⁷ These Acts were not very effective in operation, yet they marked qualitative shifts towards the direction of emancipation. Lincoln very nearly vetoed the Act of 17 July 1862. He returned the bill to the Congress along with his objection which were ultimately incorporated in the bill when it was finally passed and signed by the President.⁸

Congress also acted to abolish slavery in the District of

6 Randall, n. 5, pp. 276 and 356. On 13 March 1862, Congress passed an "additional article of war" prohibiting the use of armed forces personnel in returning fugitive slaves.

7 Ibid., p. 358.

8 Collected Works, vol. V, pp. 328-31.

Columbia. By an Act of 16 April 1862, slavery was abolished in the District with compensation to loyalist owners. Similarly, slavery in Territories was abolished by an Act of 19 June 1862.⁹ This measure did not provide for any compensation to the owners. Lincoln's first major test of strength against the radicals arose from this issue. On 30 August 1861, Major General John C. Fremont, the former Republican Presidential candidate, in charge of the Department of Missouri, issued a proclamation freeing the slaves of secessionists in Missouri.¹⁰ Lincoln, concerned with preserving the border states to the Union, ordered him to backtrack, declaring that such a move "will alarm our southern Union friends [there]."¹¹ To the President, avoiding "alarm" to such "friends" was of greater importance than freeing slaves.

This episode was followed by an altercation between Simon Cameron and President Lincoln. In his annual report for 1861, Cameron asserted the right of the government to arm and employ former slaves against the rebels. Lincoln's reaction was to summon Cameron and order him to delete that portion of the report.¹² Lincoln apparently did not relish the prospect of the

9 Randall, n. 5, p. 365.

10 James G. Randall, Lincoln the President: Springfield to Gettysburg (New York, 1945), vol. II, pp. 16-17.

11 Collected Works, vol. IV, p. 506.

12 Quarles, n. 3, p. 72.

black slave being set up to assail his white master, even if the latter was a rebel against the Union.

He was compelled to act again when General David Hunter, in charge of the newly liberated Department of the South, declared martial law in his area of command. He declared that under martial law rules, slaves in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina were "forever free".¹³ Lincoln was stunned at this "precipitate" step. He immediately ordered Hunter to withdraw the order and issued a proclamation revoking it. To Salmon Chase who requested him not to revoke it, Lincoln curtly replied "No commanding general shall do such a thing, upon my responsibility, without consulting me."¹⁴ He addressed the proclamation of revocation to the South, and quoted a Congressional resolution calling for gradual compensated abolition of slavery. Concluding, perhaps with a touch of pathos, Lincoln added, "The change it [The Congressional resolution]¹⁵ contemplates would come gently as the dews of heaven.... Will you not embrace it?"

The attempt to preserve outmoded institutions, especially that of slavery, with a war raging in the nation and with moral rhetoric at a premium, was futile. More so than any institution, slavery was integral to the circumstances culminating in the war. It was catalyst and element all in one. Lincoln wanted war to be

13 Collected Works, vol. V, p. 222.

14 Ibid., p. 219.

15 Ibid., p. 223.

waged with vigour but was tardy in tackling the cardinal issue of slavery. Radicals in Congress, abolitionists, and even his own military commanders were pushing him towards a definite stand on the issue. Try as he might he could not evade it. Much as he desired it, change could not be made to "come gently as the dews of heaven...."

The prospect that some changes, at a faster rate, might become politically and militarily desirable led the President to turn with renewed vigour to his old panacea--colonization. In his Annual Message to Congress on 3 December 1861, he called for steps to "colonize" Negroes who had been freed by the operation of the Confiscation Act of 6 August 1861. He expressed hope that the free Negroes in the North would, too, voluntarily go in for "colonization" to areas where the climate would be "congenial to them".¹⁶ Lincoln grappled with the issue within his own parameters, defined--as far as this matter was concerned--by his "strict" construction of the powers of Congress and the Executive with regard to the issue. On 6 March 1862 in a Message to Congress he urged the adoption of a joint resolution by which the Federal government would, "...cooperate with any state which may adopt [the policy of] gradual abolishment of slavery...." The resolution would empower Federal aid to "compensate for the inconveniences public and private, produced

16 Ibid., p. 48. He devoted a lengthy portion at the conclusion of this message extolling the virtues of "popular institutions" of the North based on the ideology of "free labor".

by such change of system."¹⁷

On 10 April 1862, Congress passed the resolution in substantially the same form proposed by him. This move was aimed at the border states but no support was forthcoming from that region. This was followed on 11 April, by the law calling for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Lincoln was unhappy over the passage of this Act. He preferred to see the border states coming up with the substantive feature of the bill - compensated emancipation. Further, he wanted it to be gradual, and voted for by the people of the District rather than through Congress.¹⁸

On 12 July, just before the adjournment of Congress, Lincoln made yet another attempt to sway the border state Congressmen to his views. He read out a speech in which he underlined his view that had the border states supported his earlier plan for gradual abolition of slavery, "the war would now be substantially ended." He emphasized that, "I do not speak of emancipation at once, but a decision at once to emancipate gradually." He added that such a plan would be linked up to deportation of freedmen to South America. This policy could be easily carried out if there were enough "company and encouragement" to Negroes.

17 Ibid., pp. 144-45.

18 See Letter to Horace Greeley, 24 March 1862, *ibid.*, p. 169. For a detailed study of the Congressional response to Lincoln's proposal see, Leonard P. Curry, Blueprint for Modern America: Non-military Legislation of the First Civil War Congress (Nashville, Tenn., 1968), p. 39ff.

He warned them, citing the case of General Hunter, that the pressure of his more radical supporters "is still upon me, and is increasing"¹⁹. While only seven Congressmen supported his plea, a majority of twenty-one opposed this plan as being too costly, and an invasion of state rights.²⁰ Following this meeting, on 14 July, Lincoln sent a draft bill to Congress which would enjoin the President to pay bonds at six per cent interest, to any state declaring immediate gradual abolition. Lincoln insistently viewed the entire question of emancipation as one that had to be undertaken by the states themselves. His draft bill underlined this point. It included a provision to declare the bonds "null and void", if any state should "at any times afterwards, by law reintroduce, or tolerate slavery within its limits...."²¹

By the summer of 1862, the movement for the abolition of slavery had gained greater momentum. The controversies involving Fremont and Hunter, the passage of the two Confiscation Acts and the Act for the abolishment of slavery in the District of Columbia had all gone against the grain of Lincoln's views on the subject. Throughout the North anti-slavery groups formed freedmen's aid societies to help "contraband" Negroes who had escaped slavery. Influenced by Garrison and Phillips, many

19 Ibid., pp. 317-19.

20 Quarles, n. 3, p. 107.

21 Collected Works, vol. V, p. 324.

young people moved to help these Negroes, to clothe, feed and educate them. Pressure on Lincoln was evident from the radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens and anti-slavery Congressmen such as Owen Lovejoy. Even in his own Cabinet, Charles Sumner, though a firm supporter of the President, urged him to take more drastic steps to free the slaves.

Lincoln was, however, moving according to his own timetable and his own order of priorities. In an open letter to the President, Horace Greeley editor of the New York Tribune, urged him not to be influenced by the "fossil politicians" of the border states and rigorously implement a policy to "free the slaves of secessionists"²². In his reply, Lincoln outlined, in the clearest possible manner, his policy and priorities.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution... My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave. I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do it because I believe it helps to save the Union....

He differentiated between this, his official stand, and his "oft expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."²³

22 Ibid., p. 389n.

23 Ibid., p. 388.

Lincoln had his own ideas on solving the slavery problem and it was linked to the race problem. He wanted gradual compensated emancipation--the bonded Negroes would be freed and their owners would be financially remunerated by public tax money. He then wanted to deport these liberated Negroes to Central America or West Indies. His mentor Clay, too, had thought along these lines.²⁴

In his eulogy on Henry Clay, Lincoln had lauded his deep devotion to the cause of emancipation and traced Clay's ideas to his "excellent judgement". Lincoln had praised Clay's long labours on behalf of the American Colonization Society which sought to "return to Africa her children...torn from her by the ruthless hand of fraud and violence." Concluding the tribute Lincoln had expressed his own support to these endeavours which would effect "neither races nor individuals".²⁵ When the Liberian colonization venture turned out to be less than a success, Lincoln attributed it to the expense involved in transportation of freedmen.

Lincoln's efforts towards colonization make, as James G. Randall puts it, "a dismal story". With the influx of fugitive

24 George M. Frederickson, "A Man But Not a Brother: Abraham Lincoln and Racial Equality", Journal of Southern History (New Orleans), vol. XLI, no. 1, February 1975, p. 43.

25 Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 131-32. In his Galesburg debate with Douglas he once again quoted Clay to show how he had exhibited a "tendency" towards the extinction of slavery. See Collected Works, vol. III, p. 15.

slaves into Union lines following outbreak of war, the Lincoln Administration found itself in a quandary. It was unprepared²⁶ and, initially, unwilling to deal with the problem. Lincoln sought the advice of his Cabinet and began to give detailed attention to two areas in Central America and West Indies as possible sites for Negro colonies. The Congressional Act for abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia by a gradual compensated method, was accompanied by an appropriation of \$1,000,000 to help freed Negroes to emigrate to Haiti and Liberia. The bill authorized the President himself to supervise the²⁷ operation of this clause.

All the abolitionists, and many members of Congress opposed this project of voluntary deportation. Charles Sumner attacked it for its "intrinsic and fatal injustice". He decried the economic loss entailed in losing the free labour of the Negroes. "It is vain to say that this is a white man's country", he declared,²⁸ "It is the country of man".

Lincoln had appointed James Mitchell as "Commissioner of Emigration". Mitchell was a former agent of the American Colonization Society. With the passage of the Act to help Negro "emigration", lobbyists representing Haitian, Liberian and other

26 Randall, n. 10, p. 139.

27 Charles H. Wesley, "Lincoln's Plan for Colonizing the Emancipated Negroes", Journal of Negro History (Lancaster Pa., Washington, D.C.), vol. IV, no. 1, January 1919, p. 10.

28 Ibid., p. 11n.

Central American interests began to press forward their plans. Mitchell ignored Liberia and concentrated on West Indies and
 29
 Central America.

Lincoln took a keen personal interest in formulating these plans but, in late 1861, preoccupied by other problems, he authorized Caleb Smith, Secretary of Interior to direct the project. He directed Smith to go into the plan for a colony to
 30
 be set up in Chiriqui in the Isthmus of Central America.

Ignoring Mitchell, Smith made separate arrangements with the American-owned Chiriqui Improvement Company which had the area's coal and railroad concessions. The coal samples from the area proved to be unsatisfactory and it became evident that the promoters had been less than scrupulous in selling the idea that Chiriqui was a region of vast natural resources. Further, Secretary Seward put forward his objections to the scheme, based on strong representations made against the project by several
 31
 Central American Republics.

Towards this purpose President Lincoln tried to enlist the support of free Negroes. The free Negro community had indicated by word, if not deed, that it was not interested in deportation, voluntary or otherwise. Frederick Douglass, the most

29 P.J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement: 1816-65 (New York, 1961), p. 246.

30 Collected Works, vol. II, p. 561; vol. V, pp. 2-3, 414n, 418-19.

31 Wesley, n. 27, pp. 15-17; and P.J. Staudenraus, n. 29, p. 247.

eminent of free Negroes, found the white man's logic mystifying. For him it was "...[the] most humiliating triumph of human selfishness and prejudice over human reason, that...leads men to look upon emancipation as an experiment, instead of being...the natural order of human relations." He scorned all attempts at deportation as attempts "to bail out the ocean". The Negro, he said proudly, was there to stay, "Work him, whip him, sell him, torment him, and he still lives, and clings to the American civilization...."³²

Facing indignant opposition from the leaders of the Negro community, Lincoln resorted to another strategem. He called a delegation of free Negroes, none of them of any consequence in their community, and pontificated to them on the values of deportation.

This meeting took place on 14 August 1862. While the Negroes listened graciously, Lincoln expounded his views, stating that Negroes should leave the country as they had suffered much in America and had now brought much suffering to the white Americans. He noted that without "the institution of slavery and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence." This expression of racism was not surprising as Lincoln held that it had long been his "inclination" and belief. Reiterating his view that the differences of race was of "great disadvantage" to

32 Cited by George W. Smith and Charles Judah, Life in the North During the Civil War: A Source History (Albuquerque, N.M., 1966), pp. 159-62.

both the blacks and the whites, and hence "it afford^{ed} a reason at least why we should be separated".

Instead of facing race prejudice four square, Lincoln advised the Negroes to go "where you are treated best". He requested the delegation to take up the cause of deportation which would, in his opinion, be as "grand a gesture" befitting white men.

Lincoln proceeded to sell the Chiriqui project to the skies just at the time it was about to be discredited. He promised all aid to the Negroes who would take up the project and even promised to "endeavor to have you...[the Negroes] made equals" of the other Central American people. It is surprising how, on one hand, he would have them "made equals" in Central America, but expressed his inability earlier in the speech to do so in the United States of which he was President.

The delegation sent him a gracious but non-committal reply. Subsequently, other free Negroes came out indignantly against the plan, and nothing came out of this effort.

In 1863, Lincoln was to meet Frederick Douglass who had earlier criticized his attitude towards emancipation. Negroes had been emancipated by proclamation, now Douglas sought to enlist them to fight. Douglas brought forward proposals for equal pay to Negro soldiers, equal treatment for Negro prisoners

to be exchanged with Confederates, and equal reward for Negro performance on the battlefield. Lincoln had dragged his feet on the enlistment of Negro soldiers. Now he told Douglass, that enlistment itself was "a great gain", and unequal pay was "a necessary concession" to "popular prejudice".

Douglass had asked for retaliation for Negro soldiers executed by Confederates. Lincoln was against the policy of retaliation, but an element of racial feeling, no doubt, contributed to his timidity. Even on the point of rewarding meritorious Negro soldiers Lincoln balked, stating that he would sign any commissions that were forwarded to him by the Secretary of War.

Douglass had seen prejudice in all its shades. The white men's attitudes were not new to him, he was satisfied, as he said, with a shade of irony, "with the man and with the educating tendency of the conflict".³⁴ Yet this "educating tendency", was a slow process. Lincoln in 1862, was unwilling to give up his quest for a "favourable clime" at a substantial distance from the United States where Negroes could govern themselves and develop their potentialities to the full.

On 31 December 1862, the Administration offered a contract to one Bernard Kock who proposed to launch a colony of deportees

34 Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, 1861-64 (New York, 1965), pp. 307-9.

on the Isle A'Vache in Haiti. This contract was arranged by James Mitchell. Kock had painted a glowing picture of the island and its resources. For \$50 a head, he agreed to transport 5,000 freedmen and providing them with "comfortable homes, garden lots, churches". It was then discovered that Kock was in league with certain unscrupulous capitalists of Boston and New York to use these Negroes as indentured labour to grow cotton for the cotton-hungry North. Lincoln ordered a belated investigation and ordered Seward not to countersign the contract. On 16 April 1863, the President announced the cancellation of the contract.³⁵

The unscrupulous Kock was able to enter into another contract with the Secretary of Interior under terms of which he agreed to transport some 400 contrabands to the Isle A'Vache. The conditions in the island were so miserable that word reached Lincoln, who was compelled to investigate and order a ship to rescue the hapless colonists.³⁶

Such were the ugly undercurrents of ventures on which the President reposed such great hopes. Apologists of Lincoln to the contrary notwithstanding, it is difficult to believe that a man of Lincoln's experience, shrewdness and knowledge of men, would have been completely unaware of the sordid implications of

35 Collected Works, vol. VI, p. 41n; Wesley, n. 27, pp. 17-18; and Staudenraus, n. 29, p. 247.

36 Collected Works, vol. VII, p. 164; and Wesley, n. 27, pp. 18-19.

uprooting men from their native habitat and relocating them in a distant place where even such "protection" as they had under the Constitution and laws of the United States would be unavailable to them.

One intriguing point on this whole business of "compensated emancipation" for which Lincoln gets praise from commentators, is that he had no plans as to what was to be the lot of the emancipated Negroes. He viewed the race which had suffered generations of bondage in the same way as poor whites--that once free, and settled in their "native clime" they would be on their way to economic progress. This was, to a large extent, due to Lincoln viewing the Negroes as a foreign element, and not as Americans who had suffered grievously and had to be uplifted.

Apart from colonization on a "voluntary" basis he enunciated no plan to provide a helping hand to the Negroes who would emerge out of servitude in any process of compensated emancipation. This is not surprising because he never even evinced any plan to remove the crushing disabilities of the Negroes who were already "free".

Within a few days of his signing the second Confiscation Act, coming hard on his failure to make any headway with the border states, Lincoln broached the subject of emancipation to his Cabinet. He had already worked out a draft and he sought, "incidental rather than primary advice" from his Cabinet.³⁷

37 Randall, n. 5, p. 155.

The draft proclamation led off from the Confiscation Act which Congress had passed and Lincoln had reluctantly signed on 17 July. He reiterated the terms of the Act which would lead to a forfeiture of slaves as a penalty for rebellion. The draft proclamation contained a renewed recommendation for gradual emancipation with compensation. Further, it called for the emancipation of all slaves, "as a fit and necessary military measure" on 1 January 1863. This draft, was set aside on the advice of Seward, who considered it more opportune to take such a step after a decisive military victory.³⁸

On 17 September, McClellan turned back Lee at Antietam. Within a week, Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This was indeed a "turnaround" for the man, who, on 13 September had asked, "what good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do?"³⁹

The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of 22 September 1862 opened with the theme that reunion, not abolition, was the object of the war. Lincoln designated himself in the Proclamation as the "Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy", a phrase which, as Professor Randall points out, he did not use even in

38 Collected Works, vol. V, pp. 336-37. Lincoln subsequently issued the first part of this draft as a Proclamation of an Act to Suppress Insurrection, embodying the 17 July 1862 Act of Congress, vol. V, p. 341.

39 Ibid., p. 420.

the call for troops in April 1861.⁴⁰

The President reiterated his promise to urge Congress to offer compensation to those states that adopted the measure of gradual, voluntary, emancipation. He further added that the effort "to colonize persons of African descent...will be continued." Then, came the core of the Proclamation. On 1 January 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state "...the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward and forever free." Certain acts of Congress prohibiting the armed forces from returning fugitive slaves, denying such a return in any case except to loyal owners, and treating all slaves in liberated areas as captives of war and thus turned free, were also incorporated into the Proclamation.

Closing on a note of friendship to the South, Lincoln declared that he would recommend that "loyal" owners be compensated for their loss of slaves after the war.⁴¹ The course was a rather strange one of reparations to be paid by the victor.

The Preliminary Proclamation was hotly debated in the North and South. In the North itself, the Republicans viewed it as a measure of great significance, whereas the Democrats viewed it as unconstitutional. The Confederate Congress was alarmed and the popular verdict in the South was that the move

40 Randall, n. 5, p. 162.

41 Collected Works, vol. V, pp. 433-36.

was intended to spark a slave uprising.

By the issuance of this Proclamation, according to Roland C. McConnell, "the war aims of each side...shifted. The South...ended by fighting for slavery and southern independence while the North ended by fighting for freedom and preservation of the Union."⁴² But, it must be noted that even this freedom was limited in scope and applicable only to enemy territory.

Lincoln had based his proclamation solely upon "war powers" and "as a fit and necessary war measure". Lincoln to the end hoped, as is indicated by his record, that his conservative proposal to free Negroes by a gradual compensated process would "remove the main cause of war, and deprive the disaffected leaders of all hope of winning over the more northern slave states."⁴³

The Proclamation itself, whether out of accident or design, did not contain any pro-Negro or abolitionist sentiment. The September 22 Proclamation was, in actual fact, a declaration of intention only.

The fall elections were adverse to the Republican Party's

42 Roland C. McConnell, "From Preliminary to Final Emancipation Proclamation", Journal of Negro History (Washington, D.C.), vol. 48, 1963, p. 276. (Emphasis added).

43 Randall, n. 10, p. 164.

Lincoln himself was full of doubt. To Hannibal Hamlin he wrote: "...my expectations are not as sanguine as are those of some friends." Collected Works, vol. V, p. 444.

fortunes. While reverses in the mid-term years were not unusual for a ruling party, they were also a product of war weariness. To some, they were the result of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln's Annual Message of 1 December 1862 was not too heart-warming. Benjamin Quarles notes that nearly two-fifths of it related to compensated emancipation and colonization.⁴⁴ Lincoln noted with regret, that support for voluntary deportation was not forthcoming even from those Negroes whose "interest"⁴⁵ demanded such a course.

He proposed certain amendments to the Constitution, which would "without convulsion, hush[~~ed~~ed] forever with the passing of one generation", the Civil War. These amendments which would have to be ratified by various states as well, called for the abolition of slavery by the year 1900. The President would be empowered to issue interest bearing bonds to slave owners as compensation. All slaves who had been set free by war would remain free, with compensation given to loyal owners. Congress would appropriate money to colonize "free colored persons, with their own consent,..." Lincoln's justification was the need to save the Union. He argued that "without slavery the rebellion could never have existed; without slavery it could not continue." He said his proposals which would try to mitigate any "derangement" that Southern society would face by emancipation. As a

44 Quarles, n. 3, p. 133.

45 Collected Works, vol. V, p. 529.

matter of fact, he believed, that the time-span itself would ensure that those, "whose habitual course of thought will be disturbed by the measure will have passed away before its consummation."⁴⁶

Lincoln noted that he was aware that "vagrant destitution" would follow any measure of immediate emancipation. His awareness was, however, apparently confined to the plight of the Southern whites. His subsequent words and deeds do not indicate that he planned to act on this issue for the sake of Negroes who would, after emancipation face the real destitution.

Lincoln went on to plead his case in terms of economics. He noted that the cost of emancipation by this method would be but a fraction of the cost of prolonging the war. Describing a vision of a great and wealthy country that would stand at the turn of the century, he warned that "by the folly and evils of disunion", they would lose all it had gained so far.⁴⁷

This Message was, perhaps, Lincoln's most forceful exposition of his ideas on the slavery issue. That it sounds more pathetic than cruel is in no small measure due to the complexity of Lincoln's thought regarding democracy, slavery and race. Lincoln took infinite pains to protect and advance the interests of his country. He regarded the United States as a "white" nation. Thus, he viewed compensation to white slave owners as

46 Ibid., pp. 530-31.

47 Ibid., pp. 532-35.

a just due for their loss of property. There is no such expression of sentiment for similar compensation or aid to those Negroes, held in bondage for generations, illiterate and without a thing in the world, who would by the operation of the Emancipation Proclamation be free after 1 January 1863. Lincoln explicitly warned the South that they must adopt the plan immediately to avert the trauma which he was sure would occur after the effect of the Proclamation, and for which, he had no plan.⁴⁸

Yet, Lincoln, once determined on his course of Emancipation after 1 January 1863 did not waver. To General John A. McClernand he wrote:

...I struggled nearly a year and a half to get along without touching the 'institution'; and when finally I conditionally determined to touch it, I gave a hundred days fair notice of my purpose. They [the secessionists] chose to disregard it, and I made the peremptory proclamation on what appeared to me to be a military necessity. And being made, it must stand.... 49

This letter was written a week after the edict, in response to some peace feelers sent out by certain Confederate officers through the General.

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1 January 1863, designated the areas in rebellion and excepted Tennessee and parts of

48 Ibid., p. 536. The Proclamation received support in Congress when on 11 December 1862, a resolution by George H. Yeaman of Kentucky declaring the proclamation unwarranted was defeated 94-195. See Roland C. McConnell, n. 42, p. 273.

49 Collected Works, vol. VII, pp. 48-49.

Louisiana and Virginia. It declared that "...all persons held as slaves within the said...states, are...henceforward...free." The Proclamation enjoined the freed Negroes to "abstain from all violence". The President recommended that "...they labor faithfully for reasonable wages". He also declared that such persons could be "received into the armed service of the United States..." if only to "garrison forts, positions...and to man vessels of all sorts in the said service."⁵⁰ Chase had recommended that the Proclamation be issued as "an act of justice warranted by the Constitution." The President, however, added the words "upon military necessity"⁵¹ in the final draft.

Among the abolitionists, enthusiasm for the Proclamation was somewhat restrained. This was justified by the clear stand taken by the President that the Proclamation was a military necessity rather than an act of justice. Oliver Johnson, Garrison's friend, Count Adam Gurowski, Wendell Phillips, and Lydia Maria Child, all had criticism, both substantive and personal,⁵² of the President's policy.

Garrison wrote, "The President's Proclamation is certainly matter for great rejoicing, as far as it goes...but it leaves slavery as a system..., still to exist in all the so-called loyal

50 Ibid., pp. 28-31.

51 Ibid., pp. 25-30.

52 Randall, n. 10, pp. 171-72.

Slave States...."⁵³

For the Negroes, the Proclamation was a great relief indeed. A meeting of anti-slavery enthusiasts in Boston on the 1st of January 1863, was attended by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Edward Everett Hale and Ralph Waldo Emerson. At the Tremont Temple, a Negro attorney, John S. Rock, expressed the feelings of the freedmen. Rock stated "...[considering]...what we said of him when he was elected, we must acknowledge that he has exceeded our most sanguine expectations."⁵⁴

James G. Randall notes, however:

Not only was Lincoln's emancipation of limited scope, where applied, it was beset by difficulty and delay...it was but a limping freedom that was launched by virtue of the war power....⁵⁵

The emancipation by "war power" was itself a major weakness, as its genesis was explicitly limited in that sense. Lincoln, however, consistently believed that he had no power under any other circumstances to abolish slavery. To James C. Conkling in a letter on 26 August 1863, he stated:

I think the constitution invests its commander-in-chief, with the law of war, in time of war. The most that can be said, if so much, is that

53 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 173.

54 Quarles, n. 3, pp. 143-44.

55 Randall, n. 10, p. 181.

slaves are property. Is there...any question that by the law of war, property, of both enemies and friends, may be taken when needed. 56

At the end of the year, viewing the effect of the Proclamation, Lincoln once again reiterated that he had believed in an American system where the general government had no power to emancipate slaves in any states. Rebellion should have ended before he had had to resort to it "as a military measure".

It came and as was anticipated, it was followed by dark and doubtful days... now...the rebel borders are spread still further back... Of those who were slaves at the beginning of the rebellion full one hundred thousand are now in the United States military service.... No servile insurrection, or tendency to violence and cruelty, has marked measures of emancipation and arming the blacks.... 57

There were many faults in the Proclamation. Many arose from the perspective that Lincoln had viewed the entire question of the Negro and his bondage in America throughout his political career. There was little in the Proclamation or in subsequent directives to show what the President had in prospect for the liberated slaves. While the recruitment of Negro soldiers was

56 Collected Works, vol. VI, p. 408. On 8 July 1864, he vetoed a bill in Congress which provided for emancipation of slaves. He declared: "I am...unprepared to declare...a constitutional competency in Congress to abolish slavery in states...." Collected Works, vol. VII, p. 433.

57 Annual Message to Congress, 8 December 1863, Collected Works, vol. VII, pp. 49-50.

stepped up following the Emancipation Proclamation, problems
58
arose in other areas. There was as yet no governmental
machinery to help liberated slaves. It is true that, initially,
the Proclamation had no actual effect, being limited to states
in rebellion, yet Lincoln gave little thought to this.

Yet, for all its shortcomings, the Emancipation Procla-
mation made genuine emancipation eventually inevitable. Lincoln,
perhaps, himself shared those hopes.

Chapter IV

**THE INDIAN POLICY OF THE LINCOLN
ADMINISTRATION**

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THE INDIAN POLICY OF THE LINCOLN ADMINISTRATION

The "problem" of the nomadic aboriginal tribes that were called "Red" Indians or American Indians was perhaps the first racial problem to be faced by the white men who peopled the American continent. While the response of the Indians to the white men was one of awe and of some hostility, the response of the whites was invariably hostile. The Indians were always an anachronism in an "empty" land.

It was in the nineteenth century that the Indian tribes faced the growing determination of the United States to clear them from their ancestral homes. In the first phase of the policy of "removals" the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and the Seminoles were evicted to that barren area south of Kansas called "Indian Territory". It was of no avail that these tribes had gained a Supreme Court verdict against the eviction order in 1831.

Many perceptive Americans protested against these policies. It is not surprising that many who raised their voices against the inhumanity of the "removals" were also involved in other social reform movements, particularly the anti-slavery crusade. Thus, Lydia Maria Child and her husband, David Lee, were early critics of the failings of white Americans to maintain their professions of justice. Similarly Benjamin Lundy and other Quakers exposed the rank injustice of the Indian policies. It

seems but natural that other luminaries of social reform such as James G. Birney, John Greenleaf Whittier and Wendell Phillips, among others, voiced a concern for the plight of the aboriginal inhabitants of America.¹

The problem of American policy towards the Indians was not as simple as that of Negro slavery. While the Negro sought rights as a citizen of the United States, the Indians wanted a separate existence. This problem itself required a more strenuous and imaginative response from the leaders of American society professing justice, equality--and towards the Indians--civilization.

The second phase of the "removal" policy was inaugurated by the social, economic and political upheaval caused by the Civil War.

It will be shown that the policy of the Lincoln Administration towards the many problems arising out of the military as well as economic forces affecting the Indians were as good or as bad as those of the preceding governments.

Abraham Lincoln came from a family of frontiersmen. His grandfather who had migrated to Kentucky around 1780, was killed in a fight with Indians in 1784. Lincoln's father moved in 1816 to Indiana, where Lincoln was brought up. The family

1 Linda K. Kerber, "The Abolitionist Perception of the Indian", The Journal of American History (Bloomington, Indiana), vol. LXII, no. 2, September 1975, pp. 271-95.

shifted to Illinois when he was about 19 years of age. It was in Illinois where Lincoln himself had contact with the Indians-- this was during the last Indian "removal" of the region in 1831, called often the Black Hawk War. In the war, Lincoln joined a volunteer company and served for a brief period from 21 April 1832 to 16 June 1832.²

Lincoln did not manifest towards the Indians an attitude different from that of his fellow whites who lived in his region. To those people the Indians were a savage race. They were an unnecessary obstruction in the path of the pioneers who were bringing with them Christian Civilization and progress to the vast prairies. Either the obstacle must recede on its own before the onward march of the Christian soldiers or it should be forcibly moved away with exemplary severity if it manifests belligerent intransigence.

The period 1850-1860 was one of steady westward expansion. This expansion had its base in the North-western states which were to form the Republican heartland as Lincoln made his way to the Presidency. It was, too, a period of great emigration from Europe to America. The emigrants, generated the push westward towards cheaper land and the possibilities of mineral wealth. The westward stream had become a torrent in the mid-fifties, lured by the gold-fields of California and Colorado.

2 James D. Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers of Presidents: 1861-69, vol. VI (Published by Authority of Congress), 1899), pp. 3-5.

This movement, initially, swept across the Great Plains, the territory lying between the west of the Mississippi and east of the Rockies. It was only by the late 1850s that the movement of settlers westward began to take shape. The Great Plains was the home of groups of Indians who, having mastered the horse, offered fierce but doomed resistance to the white encroachers in their native domain. To the north of this area, lived the Sioux and the Cheyennes. In the south and the south-east lay the Apache and Arapahoe on one hand, and on the other, the "Five Civilized Tribes" living in the Indian Territory. Among the 'Civilized Tribes' were the Cherokees, who had, a generation before, been driven out of Georgia by General Andrew Jackson. It was the movement leading to the arrival of permanent settlers, following and being followed by railroads, that brought about the tragic culmination of the struggle of the Indians to maintain their homeland. It was a wholly unequal struggle. The Indians living in a subsistence economy, technologically backward and poorly organized were no match for the white interlopers who represented the advance guard of a powerful, new economic culture of capitalism, accompanied by a political culture of nationalism and expansionism, and a social culture of white superiority and "manifest destiny".

The Indians could hardly understand the times they were living in and the forces they had to contend with. If they were "brutal" on occasion, as the pioneers believed, it was because they were fighting for survival. Of the whites it can only be

said that their science and culture had advanced to a sufficiently high level to at least "understand" the Indian problem-- the tragic plight of a people facing not merely displacement from the lands of their ancestors but the prospect of horrible extinction of the race itself.

It is not of some distant medieval past that we are talking about when we seek to examine Lincoln's attitude towards the Indians. We are talking of a period as recent as a mere 115 years ago. Even then, high-minded individuals were not lacking who viewed with horror the plight of the Indians and who called for a more humane, "Christian" policy towards them. How did Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States respond to the issue?

The policy of the Lincoln Administration was explicit in one sense. Lincoln's party had come to power with a platform derived, among others, from the Free Soilers. The demand for free public lands to genuine settlers, which Lincoln espoused, led to the Homestead Act of 1862. This Act was a standing invitation to settlers to move West by the thousands, thus making inevitable the final bloody confrontation with the Indians. The Railroad Act of 1862 threw open the West to the pernicious influence of the 'Iron Horse'. The coming of the railroads really decided the fate of the Indians. The railroad construction teams massacred the buffalo, the prime source of the sustenance of the Plains Indians. With the mining frontier moving

steadily eastward, and the farming frontier moving westwards; the Indians were caught in a vise. With the outbreak of the Civil War, several of these trends outlined above, were intensified and newer trends emerged. The Civil War was coincidental with the first Republican Administration.

President Lincoln, with a double burden of introducing a new Administration, as well as fighting a war, was little concerned with that which was regarded as a peripheral problem. The Confederate States threatened the existence of the United States whereas the Indians were a temporary nuisance. In the first year of his Administration, the President was content in nominating Agents to the Indian Agencies on the basis of recommendations that he received. He did, in certain cases, take cognizance of the allegations of bribery and corruption against prospective Agents. In June 1861, for instance, he rejected the recommendation of William P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs to appoint Anson Dart Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Washington. Dart, Lincoln noted, had several allegations of bribery and corruption against him.³

The Indian tribes had been given the status of "nations" wherever they resided. Treaties had been concluded between the United States Government and the Indian Nations, and ratified

3 Roy P. Basler et al, eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, 1953), vol. IV, p. 403. Hereinafter referred to as Collected Works.

by the Senate in the prescribed manner. The policy of the government had been to guard against Indian "encroachment" by means of a chain of barrier forts. In the late fifties of the nineteenth century with white land-hunger mounting, the process of herding Indians into reservations was begun. The Indians were moved, to what was regarded by the authorities, as economically useless areas from the point of view of white settlement. When the Indians were "persuaded" to leave a hunting area over which they claimed ownership to enter a reservation, they were "compensated" by a purchaser acting with government consent. Some lands were "ceded" outright by the Indians to the government for a consideration, while others were ceded "to be held in trust". Such agreements were supposedly "voluntary".

After signing a treaty, the Indians were placed by the Indian Bureau under an Agent who was a political appointee of the President himself. These Indian Agents were responsible for the disbursement of an annual subsidy paid to the Indians, usually in kind. Many of the agents were incompetent and corrupt. They paid little attention to the welfare of the Indians. Their government did not encourage them to treat the "Indian Nations" as American diplomatic agents were to treat other nations. Henry B. Whipple, a missionary amongst the Sioux has left a devastating critique of how the Agency system functioned. "We will not permit [them] to exercise one single element of that sovereign power which is necessary for a nation's

existence", he declared.⁴

Bishop Whipple noted that while the avowed purpose of the treaties was to purchase Indian lands at a fair price to encourage settlement and agriculture of the whites and to ensure that the money paid was used in the best way to "civilize" the Indians, the real purpose was to pay the worthless debts of white traders, to satisfy their claims, whether good or bad, against the Indians. He added: "...the ostensible parties to the treaty are the government of the United States and the Indians; the real parties are the Indian agents, traders and politicians." As for the Agents, the Bishop stated, "that even at best the Indians are three years out of every four under incompetent agents...the only human beings in the United States who has none of the restraints or protection of law is the treaty Indian...."

Bishop Whipple wrote this in 1862 while Lincoln was President and when a "massacre" by Indians had given rise to heightened passions, Whipple pointed out that the United States was "almost the only... [nation] in history that has extended its conquests without extending its government...." Why was it that in Canada, the English government had never faced an Indian War "and no lives have been lost by Indian massacre"?⁵

4 Henry B. Whipple, "The Indian System", North American Review (reprint), no. 258, Winter 1973, p. 34.

5 Ibid., pp. 36-39.

The Indians driven into reservations by force and fraud were not safe even at that stage. Sooner or later their lands were coveted by some speculator and they came under pressure to part with the area that the white man wanted. Paul W. Gates notes that "No uniform policy towards their [the Indian lands] disposition was worked out...."⁶ It was easy then, for speculators to lay their hands on the Indian lands. The traditional process of divesting the Indians of their right to occupy land was to draw a treaty providing for the sale or cession to the national government of the Indian right; when the treaty was ratified by the Senate, the land thus ceded became public domain and subject to the public land laws. Vast tracts of lands were "bought" from the hapless Indians by speculators. None of these became part of the public domain. Paul Gates points out how tracts in Kansas varying from the tiny 2,571 acre tract of Christian Indians to the great Usage reserve of 8,841,927 acres that had been as Indian reserves and that were "forever barred from becoming a part of the public lands of the United States" became prey of speculators and the railroads, and "helpful politicians". A fourth of the area of Kansas, "and by all odds the best fourth", passed by the treaty process from Indian ownership to individuals, land-speculating companies, and

6 Paul W. Gates, "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System", American Historical Review (Washington, D.C.), vol. XLI, July 1936, p. 661.

railroads...,⁷" writes Prof. Gates. Elsewhere it has been noted that subsequent to the Homestead Act, a number of "treaties and sales contracts were ratified, providing for the sale of several million acres in Kansas to the railroad companies."⁸ The sale of 800,000 acres of Cherokee land "by a process that was not always legitimate" to the American Emigration Company, and from the Company to James F. Joy the "Railroad King",⁹ caused a furor even in those days.

The lands of the Delaware, the Pottawatomie, and the Sac and Fox Indians were sold not to settlers but to the railroads and speculators. Treaties authorizing the sales of "surplus" Delaware and Pottawatomie lands to the Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western Railroad for \$1.25 per acre were proclaimed on 22 August 1860, and 19 April 1862, respectively. Titles to rich farmlands comprising 223,966 acres in the Atchison, Leavenworth and Jefferson countries in Kansas also passed on to the Leavenworth,¹⁰ Pawnee and Western Railroad. The Company failed to pay the Indians the sum of \$286,742.15 for lands appropriated. The terms of the treaty had stipulated that the Company should hand

7 Paul W. Gates, Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts over Kansas Land Policy, 1854-1890 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1954), pp. 5-7.

8 Gates, n. 6, p. 672.

9 Ibid., pp. 673-74. The provisions of the older treaty had been violated and yet another was negotiated.

10 Ibid.

over the money to the treasury by a stipulated time. The Government was to keep the money in trust for the Indians. This trust would initiate "agricultural pursuits" amongst them and a certain sum was to have been held in "safe" stocks.

But the railroad did not pay up what is owed. President Lincoln did not want the treaty to "fail" he was more conscious to avoid discomfort to the Company than to protect Indians from being cheated. On the plea "not knowing what would be the desire of the said Indians on this point..." the President ordered the Company to execute bonds equal to the defaulted sum. The agreement was to be taken as "money paid by the Railroad Company, and...invested by the President in the said Railroad Bonds." Nothing was said about the implications of the arrangement for
¹¹
 the Indians.

It has been stated earlier, that the policy of the Republican Administration was a dynamic one as regards the West. The major legislative actions of the Lincoln Administration were the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land Grant Act, and, the Railroad Act of 1862 that granted large tracts of free public land to the railroad companies building across the continent. This land which was to act as a subsidy, provided the incentive for the

11 Order for the issue of Bonds for Delaware Indians, 10 June 1861, Collected Works, vol. IV, pp. 400-02. In 1886, the Delaware were compelled to abandon their diminished reserve in Kansas. "...They accepted a second treaty which provided for the sale of the 92,598 acres contained in the reserve to the Missouri River Railroad for \$2.50 per acre...." See Gates, n. 7, p. 675.

Union Pacific and the Central Pacific Railroad companies. The land grants had cut across Indian lands at several places.

The Government undertook to "solve" that particular problem by action to "extinguish" the rights of the Indians. This dishonest and inhumane policy, as carried out initially, could have inexorably led to the "extinguishing" of the Indians as a people. But the Lincoln Administration was not willing to bother itself with considerations relating to the equity and implications of the policy.

As has been mentioned earlier the thrust of the railroads brought about the destruction of the vast herds of bison that the Indians hunted as their prime source of subsistence. The railroads, operating in tandem with the Homestead Act, had the effect of moving hordes of settlers to the West. These settlers were not interested in legal niceties relating to rights of Indians and they were voters--and always right! The policy that they wanted, which their government was not unwilling to pursue, was to "extinguish" Indian rights with as little bit of fuss as was possible.¹²

There was nothing covert or secret about this policy. Section 2 of the Pacific Railway Act of July 1862 stated:

...The United States shall extinguish
as rapidly as may be the Indian titles

12 See Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier (New York, 1971), edn. 3, pp. 653-55.

to all the lands falling under the operation of this Act. 13

It was a policy that pushed Indians to strike out in sheer desperation. Their ventures were doomed to failure and brought terrible reprisals on their head. In one such episode on 29 November 1864, described as one of the bloodiest and most disgraceful in the American Indian Wars, a contingent of the Colorado Militia under Colonel J.M. Chivington, a pastor in civil life, massacred some 450 Indians. This massacre took place at Sand Creek, in south-western Colorado. It was a region that was to blossom forth in a few years as an important area for rail-¹⁴road interests.

The amount of lands in Indian reservations or claimed by the Indians in 1862 was probably 175,000,000 acres. Gates points out, "Between 100,000,000 and 125,000,000 acres of Indian land have been sold since 1862, practically one half as much as¹⁵ the total acreage which has been entered under the Homestead Law."

13 Henry Steele Commager, ed., Documents of American History (New York, 1968), edn. 8, p. 411.

14 See Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, eds., American Violence: A Documentary History (New York, 1970), pp. 273-74. This massacre was once again the outcome of greed of the white men. The discovery of gold in Pikes Peak country saw a hundred thousand miners crossing the Plains in 1859 and "elbowing their way into Cheyenne and Arapaho lands..." Fighting began in Colorado when the Indian agents tried to defraud the Indians of the lands they had been given by a previous treaty in Ft. Laramie in 1851. The bloody war that resulted cost the government \$30 million. See Billington, n. 12, pp. 655-57.

15 Gates, n. 7, pp. 661-62.

This appraisal of Prof. Gates indicates the implications for the Indians, of policies that acquired momentum with the accession to power of Lincoln and his Republican Party. Such a course, when viewed along with the manner in which Washington made or honoured "treaties" with Indians, brings out starkly the cruel chicanery to which the Indians were subjected.

The onset of the Civil War compounded the difficulties of the Indians. The Lincoln Administration was quick to detect "Confederate sympathies" among some Indians who were caught in areas dominated by the Confederacy. For its own reasons the Confederate Government sought to enlist the help of Indians even though it had no real solicitude for their rights or welfare. Often the Indians got into trouble because certain Agents were pro-Confederate.

Southern sympathizers among officials and ex-officials in the Indian Territory were very numerous, notes Jennings C. Wise. Douglas H. Cooper, the Choctaw and Chickasaw agent, an appointee of Buchanan, was one such person. "His untrustworthiness was notorious yet was well matched by that of men placed in office during the early days of Lincoln's Administration. Some refused to give the Indians any assurance of the continued interest of the United States Government in their concerns. Others...worked openly for secession..."¹⁶ As early as 17 May

16 Jennings C. Wise, The Red Man and the New World Drama, Vine Deloria, Jr., rev. (New York, 1971), pp. 223-24.

1861, the Confederate Government appointed Benjamin McCulloch, Brigadier-General of its Provisional Army, to the command of the Indian Territory. The Confederate Congress had moved even prior to May 1861 in delineating its Indian policy. Its Bureau of Indian Affairs, was, significantly, attached to the War Department. On 21 May 1861, the Confederacy established a pro-¹⁷ tectorate over the Indian Nations.

It is not relevant for the purposes of the present discussion to examine the role of various Indian "nations" vis-a-vis the Union and the Confederate regimes. Annie H. Abel has presented a useful survey of the theme in the American Historical Review.

The bulk of the Indians caught in the Civil War were the "Five Civilized Tribes" living in what is now the state of Oklahoma. These tribes, had managed to overcome the trauma of their deportation from Georgia and Florida thirty years previously and had managed to establish the rudiments of "civilization"--schools, churches and government.

The Confederate authorities showed little tenderness to those Indians who refused to support their cause. The Creeks, for instance, underwent enormous suffering because of their support to the Union. Refugees from their homes in the "Indian Territory", these Creeks faced equally great difficulties when

17 Annie Heloise Abel, "The Indians in the Civil War", American Historical Review, vol. XV, February 1910, p. 281.

they crossed the Union lines to Kansas. William P. Dole, the Union's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, called for a "most generous and ample legislation on the part of Congress for these loyal, suffering and destitute Indians."¹⁸ However, as Abel points out, "their very hardships and necessities afforded¹⁹ to agents and politicians, a rare opportunity for speculation." The Senate, on 14 May 1862, demanded that the Indian refugees in Kansas be returned immediately to the Indian Territory. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs stated that the presence of Confederates made this action impossible. He promised, however,²⁰ to look into the problem as and when it was feasible.

The response of the Union Government, in this initial period of the Civil War, to the problems of the Indian Territory was, to say the least, tardy. Whereas the Confederates had put their Commissioner of Indian Affairs under their War Department, there was little change in Washington in the Administration's view that the Indians were not an important military factor in the Civil War. Both sides were aware of the possible undesirable consequences to themselves of arming the Indians.

18 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Message of the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, 3rd sess., 37th Congress (Washington, D.C., 1862), vol. II, p. 70. Hereinafter cited as Message of the President.

19 Abel, n. 17, p. 289.

20 Collected Works, vol. IV, p. 34ln.

With the defeat and the consequent expulsion of the pro-Union Indians from Indian Territory, Lincoln was compelled to act. The man pushing Lincoln to act was Senator James H. Lane, who argued that the way should be opened for friendly Indians who were refugees in Kansas to return to their homes and to be protected there by Union troops.

Lincoln appointed Lane to ^{the} rank of Brigadier-General on 16 December 1861. Bickering broke out between General David Hunter, commanding the Department of Kansas, and General Lane. Lincoln ruled that Lane should operate under the overall command of General Hunter. At the same time he wrote to the Secretary of War that the Lane expedition "shall be as much as has been promised...and not any more. I have not intended that it shall be a great exhausting affair...."²¹ In his first Annual Message to Congress on 3 December 1861, the President had noted that in Kansas, in particular, several tribes had renounced their allegiance to the United States and had entered into treaties with the insurgents. He stressed, however, that many tribes had given assurances of loyalty to the Union, and had sought the presence of Federal troops to protect them.²²

The Cherokees faced a problem since their location had forced them initially, to negotiate with the Confederacy. John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, eventually managed

21 Ibid., vol. V, p. 71, 71n and pp. 115-16.

22 Ibid., p. 46.

to go over to the Federal lines carrying with him the Nation's money and valuable papers. On 12 September 1862 the Chief was received by Lincoln. Subsequently he put forth his position in a letter to the President on 16 September 1862. Chief Ross outlined the recent course of events and the actions his tribe had been forced to take.²³ He noted that the United States had had several treaties with the Cherokees, and that under those Treaties of "Friendship and Alliance", the Cherokee Nation had placed itself under the protection of the United States: "In consequence of the want of protection...the Cherokees were forced for the preservation of their country and existence to negotiate with the 'Confederate States'". He then pleaded for protection for his tribe and "...a recognition [by] the govern-²⁴ment of the obligations of the existing treaties...."

The President's reply to Chief John Ross was a masterly evasion of responsibility or commitment. On 25 September 1862: "I have been unable to examine and determine the exact treaty relations between the United States and the Cherokee Nation." He stated that he had not even been able to determine whether, as the Chief claimed, that the United States had failed in its treaty claims to protect the Indians. Lincoln did promise aid and protection to the tribe in the future.

23 He gained this interview with the help of Mark W. Delahay, a personal friend of Lincoln. Ibid., pp. 415-16.

24 Ibid., pp. 440-41n.

The letter was in marked contradiction to his views expressed in the Annual Message on 3 December of the previous year. He had stated that he was aware that several agents had gone over to the Confederates but was confident, on the basis of letters written by several prominent Chiefs giving "assurance of their loyalty to the Union".²⁵

Little or nothing was done subsequent to this and the Collected Works indicate that in a letter of 18 February 1864, John Ross petitioned the President to alleviate "the extreme destitution to which the people of the Cherokee Nation have been reduced by the disaster of the present war." On 25 June 1864, an appropriation was approved by Congress authorizing the Secretary of Interior to "extend relief to Indians, including Cherokees, reduced to want on account of their friendship to the United States."²⁶

25 Ibid., p. 440.

26 Ibid., vol. VII, pp. 196, 196n. Lincoln endorsed and forwarded this letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs with the comment, "Please examine and report on this case." While Ross was in Washington, the Cherokees, in a special session of their National Council at Cowskin Prairie formally abrogated the treaty they had made with the Confederacy. In March 1864, the Chocktaws held a convention, elected a Provisional Governor, and sent E.P. Perkins to Washington. "Perkins...went on to Washington and there endeavoured to shift all the blame for the Chocktaw defection upon the shoulders of Douglas H. Cooper (the pro-Confederate Agent) where undoubtedly a very large share of it deserved to rest. The government...refused to take any action whatever...." Abel, n. 17, pp. 295-96.

The Administration was less than generous in its treatment to the Indian Nations particularly to the Cherokees and the Creeks who had at no time supported the Confederacy wilfully. They had, at great cost to themselves, courageously, like the Chief Opothleyohola, fought against the secessionists. Annie H. Abel notes "The effect of the war upon the great tribes had been most disastrous...for years and years, it was sad picture of charred dwellings, broken fences, unstocked homesteads and people that presented itself to the white squatters who thronged the Indian Territory during the Reconstruction Period."²⁷

In places in the North-west the Indian tribes faced a different sort of problem--the ever mounting pressure and hostility from white settlers. A sense of desperation on their part contributed to the emergence of an inflammable situation.

In August 1862, the Sioux of Minnesota, rose against the settlers. Their onslaught termed the "Minnesota Massacre", cost the lives of some eight hundred settlers and soldiers. The attack was, as usual, directed against the general policy of the whites in treating treaties with Indians as "scraps of paper". In this particular instance, the Yankton Sioux had sold some 800,000 acres of their reservation in 1858, for which they were to receive \$336,000. This treaty was made partly to preserve the Red Pipe-stone Quarry, an area sacred to most of the Indian

27 Abel, n. 17, p. 296.

tribes of the Plains. The treaty stipulated that the Quarry²⁸ should be demarcated and set aside for the Indians only. The whites took over the land, but dragged their feet in regard to payment, wrote Bishop Whipple: "Up to the time of the massacre the Indians had not received one single cent, except fifteen thousand dollars in goods, many of which were almost useless...." The Bishop termed it as the central cause of the uprising along with white penetration into the area of the Red Pipe-stone²⁹ Quarry, lured by rumour of its mineral wealth.

President Lincoln, was, understandably so, involved with other problems of vital importance. He wrote a frantic letter to Governor Ramsey of Minnesota asking him "...attend to the Indians...necessity knows no law...." Lincoln then sent his Secretary, John G. Nicolay, Senator Morton Wilkinson and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dole, to investigate the uprising and to report to him first hand. They sent a joint telegram on 27 August stating:

We are in the midst of a most terrible and exciting Indian War. Thus far, the massacre of white settlers has been fearful...all are rushing to the frontier to defend the settlers. 30

28 See Charles J. Kappler, Indian Treaties 1778-1883 (New York, 1973), p. 779; and Geo. Catlin, North American Indians: Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions (Ross & Haines Inc., Minneapolis, 1841, Rep. 1965), vol. II, pp. 169-76.

29 Whipple n. 4, p. 35; and Wise, n. 16, pp. 262-64.

30 Collected Works, vol. V, p. 397.

Retaliation was swift in coming. Union troops were despatched against the Indians and they crushed the uprising. No less than 300 Indian prisoners were brought before a military court which condemned them to be executed. Governor Ramsey and General Pope, the Military Commander, pressed for the immediate execution of the condemned men. Lincoln, was, however, more cautious, and agreed to act after his Annual Message on 1 December 1862. He requested the Minnesota authorities to send him more detailed information, as he reviewed the cases.

On 11 December, in response to a Senate resolution, requesting details of the "Minnesota Massacre", Lincoln submitted the reports of the Secretary of the Interior stating his policy in a covering letter. He stated that he was anxious "not to act with so much clemency as to encourage another outbreak on one hand, nor with so much severity as to be real cruelty." After delivering his Message to Congress, the President wrote to Joseph Holt, the Judge Advocate General for a legal opinion as to whether he "could conclude to execute only a part of them...."³¹

On the basis of his review Lincoln's initial line of thought was to execute only those Indian prisoners guilty of "violating females". A satisfactory number could not materialize! "Contrary to my expectation, only two of this class were found", the President noted. Lincoln then decided that some 39 Indians

³¹ Ibid., pp. 537-38.

guilty of participation in "massacres" were to be executed. ³²

For the Indians of Minnesota, the uprising was a major disaster. The travails of the Sioux Nation were to culminate in the tragic massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890--an incident that provided its echoes in Wounded Knee several months ago. Bishop Whipple's comments on the sad conditions of the Sioux of Minnesota makes poignant reading:

I ask only for justice for a wronged and neglected race... The United States has virtually left the Indians without protection.... The first thing needed is honesty...; the second...to frame instructions so that the Indians shall be the ward of the government.... 33

In a report to the House of Representatives, the Secretary of Interior John P. Usher, concluded that, "...the real cause of the outbreak is difficult if not impossible to determine...." ³⁴

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs mentioned that certain actions of Governor Ramsey of Minnesota had precipitated the crisis. The Governor's action "as I have no doubt, was induced by misrepresentations, made by parties for interested motives," the Commissioner wrote. But he too placed the blame for the uprising on the Indians. ³⁵

32 Ibid., vol. V, pp. 550-51; see also Letter to Brigadier-General H.H. Sibley, p. 542. Subsequently, one hundred Indians were executed in 1866, ignoring the Presidential pardon of 1862. See Wise, n. 16, p. 264.

33 Ibid., vol. V, p. 173n.

34 Ibid., vol. VI, p. 104n.

35 Message of President, pp. 62-63.

The Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was submitted to the President in November 1862. It was a reasonably honest and objective document. The Commissioner was quite satisfied with the "recently adopted" policy of confining Indians to reservations. He added: "In very many instances the reservation is entirely surrounded by white settlements, and however much the fact is to be regretted, it is, nevertheless, almost invariably true that the tracts of lands still remaining in the possession of the Indians...are the objects of cupidity of their white neighbors...." Commenting on the problems of "civilizing" the Indians the Commissioner noted that a white man harming the Indian was beyond the reach of law but for an Indian who committed some crime against the whites, "punishment is sure and swift, and often times is visited upon the whole tribe." He called for a "more generous" legislation, on the part of the States where Indians were located, to remove gradually their disabilities and to admit them to full citizenship.

Referring to Indians in California, the Commissioner spoke of their plight resulting from the massive tide of emigration "almost unexampled in history". He said that there were no treaties with these Indian tribes:

...with no country on earth to which they can migrate; in the midst of a people with whom they cannot assimilate, they have no recognized claims upon the government, and are almost compelled to become vagabonds - to steal or to starve. They are not even unmolested upon the scanty reservations we set apart for their use.... It is now

perhaps too late to correct this error by making treaties, and it only remains for us to do voluntarily that justice we have refused to acknowledge in the form of treaty obligations. 36

In the report to the House, the Secretary of Interior recommended the prohibition of all contracts and promises between white traders and Indians. He urged Congress "to provide by law for the purchase of such goods...as the Indians need, to be paid for from the sums provided by treaties to be paid to the Indians. These should be placed in the charge of a storekeeper, under the control of the agent...." He admitted that for all the ostensible reasons that the government had given to remove Indians from their land, and for all the legitimacy of the "consent" of the Indians, "...it is well known that they have yielded to a necessity which they could not resist."³⁷

The Lincoln Administration did have the knowledge of the conditions under which the Indians laboured. But it did not make any serious or sustained efforts to alleviate these conditions. The frank reports of its own officials along with the letters of people like Bishop Whipple failed to stimulate action by the President. A prominent Radical Republican, Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio recommended to Lincoln even before the Minnesota affair "...that measures should be immediately taken to prevent it [an outbreak]. What those measures should be, Mr Whipple

36 Message of the President, p. 78.

37 Ibid., Report of the Secretary of Interior, p. 13.

will be able to inform you." The Indians were to Lincoln a "law and order" problem there is little to indicate that he viewed the matter with the broad humanitarian outlook of even the humane reform advocates of the era. While Lincoln was not a blood-thirsty Indian-hater, the problems of ensuring just and equitable treatment to these indigenous inhabitants was of somewhat less than marginal interest to him.

In his second Annual Message to Congress on 1 December 1862, Lincoln did not use the kind of information provided by the reports from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of Interior. He played up the bogey of Confederate instigation of the Plains Indians rather than dealing with the larger issues mentioned in these reports.

The Message contained sharp criticism of the "insubordination" of Indians. "The Indian Tribes", he said, "...have during the past year manifested a spirit of insubordination, and at several points engaged in open hostilities against white settlements in their vicinity."

The President asserted the "Minnesota Massacre" perpetrated by Indians had caused great destruction in the state. "The causes of the episode were "not definitely known, and suspicions, which may be unjust, need not be stated."

Lincoln did not know the causes but he did not hesitate

38 Letter of 30 September 1862, Collected Works, vol. V, p. 455n.

to indicate a possible solution. "The people of the State manifest much anxiety for the removal of the tribes beyond the limits of the state....", said Lincoln. It was an inhumane solution--a virtual sentence of doom for the Indians. But Lincoln showed no moral revulsion against the approach, demonstrating the shakiness of attempts to depict him as some sort of a moral force.

Lincoln sought to indicate that a general alliance of the Plains Indians, perhaps at the instigation of the Confederates, was taking shape. "Information was received by the Indian Bureau...that a simultaneous attack was to be made...by all the tribes between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains." It was a highly exaggerated appraisal that could have only the effect of creating indignation and violence against the Indians. With characteristic nebulosity the President concluded his discussion by commending to the "especial consideration" of Congress the idea of a "re-modeled" Indian system. He said he had been "impressed" with the idea that it could be "profitably done."³⁹

That Lincoln fully subscribed to the policy of Indian "removals" and "extinguishment of Indian rights" is clearly brought out in his third Annual Message to Congress on 8 December 1863. Where Indian lands had minerals, he believed that they should go to more suitable hands than those of the Indians. He noted:

39 Ibid., pp. 525-26.

The condition of several organized Territories is generally satisfactory, although Indian disturbances in New Mexico have not been entirely suppressed. The mineral resources of Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, New Mexico and Arizona are proving far richer than has been heretofore understood.... The measures provided at your last session for the removal of certain Indian tribes have been negotiated which...contain stipulations for extinguishing the possessory rights of the Indians to large and valuable tracts of lands. It is hoped that the effect of these treaties will result in the establishment of permanent relations with such tribes as have been brought into frequent and bloody collision with our outlying settlements and immigrants.

Sound policy and our imperative duty to these wards of the government demand our anxious and constant attention to their material well being, to their progress in the arts of civilization, and above all, to that moral training which, under blessing of Divine Providence, will confer upon them the elevated and sanctifying influences, the hopes and consolations of the Christian faith. 40

As an exercise in pious humbuggery, with implications far removed from justice and equity, this statement of Abraham Lincoln is in a class by itself. The President was doing nothing more than describing the policy of the Administration in practice.

Earlier in the same year, on 3 March 1863, a law had been

40 Ibid., vol. VII, pp. 47-48. In this Message, Lincoln reiterated his call for the remodelling of the Indian system stating "the urgent need for immediate legislative action." Bills introduced on this respect by Alexander Ramsey in the Senate (29 April 1864) and William Windom in the House (29 January 1864) failed to become law, p. 48n.

enacted to deprive the Indians of the only legal means of enforcing their constitutional rights. The Court of Claims set up in 1854, was the means whereby which the Indians could pursue their disputes against the government especially those arising out of property cession. The Act of 1863 "withdrew from the Court of Claims jurisdiction over all claims based on an Indian treaty that was not pending on December 30, 1862."⁴¹

On 28 March 1863, President Lincoln met a delegation of Indian chiefs. The speech to the Chiefs, relayed through interpreters, was recorded by the Washington Daily Morning Chronicle. The chiefs were the representatives of the Cheyenne, Kiowai, Arapahoe, Comanche, Apache and the Caddo tribes. Lincoln impressed upon the Indian Chiefs the immense differences between the two races, and went on to explain the reasons for this difference. "The pale-faces", he said, "are numerous and prosperous due to their cultivation of land...." and other related economic activity. The pale-faces did not depend on hunting game for subsistence. "This is the chief reason of the difference: but there is another. Although we are now engaged in a great war between one another, we are not as a race, so much disposed to fight and kill one another as our red brethren."

When the Chiefs asked him for his advice, he stated that while he was not sure of his capability of advising them as

41 Wise, n. 16, p. 261.

regards the transformation of their mode of existence, he would advise them to take to "cultivation of land". Outlining the government's policy, he stated:

It is the object of this government to be on terms of peace with you...we constantly endeavour to be so. We make treaties with you and try to observe them; and if our children should some times behave badly, and violate these treaties, it is against our wish. You know it is not possible for any father to have his children do precisely as he wishes them to do so. 42

The Great White Father had spoken. He expressed pain that his "children" sometimes behaved badly. He knew that they knew what price the Indians would have to pay for similar "misbehaviour". He did not have to spell it out. He had not a word to say on whether there could possibly be some weakness or deficiency in the policies that he and his Administration pursued in regard to the belaboured Red "children".

Chapter V

THE PRESIDENT AND THE WORKING PEOPLE

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When President-elect Abraham Lincoln passed through Cincinnati on his way to Washington in February 1861 he was serenaded by two thousand workers of German origin. They called on him to fulfil his election pledges and promised him their full support. Lincoln, ever the politician, responded by telling them that "working men ... were the basis of all governments." Subsequently he declared in his first Annual Message of 3 December 1861 that, "... labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much higher consideration..." It was Lincoln who poignantly envisaged the "due time when weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men."¹

Such statements duly reproduced in textbooks tend to leave the impression on the reader that the working people were the object of Lincoln's tender solicitude. A closer examination of his thought and record, in the context of the condition of the working class and economic trends of the era, is called for to obtain a more balanced appraisal.

The period 1820-1860 was one of great importance to the United States. This period saw the acquisition of vast territories and the rounding out of the continental boundaries

1 Roy P. Basler et al, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, 1953), 8 vols., vol. IV, pp. 201-3, vol. V, p. 52 and vol. IV, p. 240. Hereinafter referred to as Collected Works.

of the nation. Equally important was the growth of manufacturing and transportation. The revolution in transportation helped to create a national market and also to populate rapidly the western regions.²

The volume of domestic and foreign trade increased significantly. Of particular importance was the growing volume of grain being shipped eastwards to Buffalo and southwards to New Orleans. This period saw the shift of Western trade from the South to the Eastern and foreign markets. This was a consequence of the rapid industrialization of the Northeast.³

The rate of growth of manufacturing steadily increased during the decades before 1860. In the fifty years preceding the Civil War, the total value of manufactures rose ten-fold. Much of this manufacture was still concentrated in small independent units. Merchant capital was still the prime source of investment but the shift towards industrial capital was gradually felt. This was particularly true of areas that came under the influence of the new transportation grid. The transformation of the organization of the system of manufacture towards the factory system emerged, but was, in this period,

2 See George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1850 (New York, 1962), pp.32-103.

3 Douglas C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (New York, 1966), pp. 105-9 and 141; also see Taylor, n. 2, pp.176-7.

still one of "degree rather than of kind."⁴ The expansion of agriculture into new lands and the increasing efficiency achieved by the increasing use of new agricultural implements made possible a sharp rise in agricultural productivity.

The Northeast became more clearly demarcated as a manufacturing region between 1840 and 1840. Robert E. Gallman has shown that the output of commodities (agricultural, manufactured and mined) grew rapidly between 1844 and 1854. The link-up between Northeast and the West became more accentuated.⁵

On the eve of the Civil War, the United States stood on the threshold of a period of rapid industrialization which it was to accomplish subsequently, in the period 1870-1900. Surveying the scene, the report of the Eighth Census taken in 1860 was able to report the advances of the decade. It noted a 170 per cent increase in coal production, a 42 per cent increase in the iron industry, a 76 per cent increase in the other branches of industry and agriculture.⁶

4 Taylor, n. 2, pp. 212, 232. Louis M. Hacker, The Triumph of American Capitalism: The Development of Forces in American History to the End of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1947), pp. 251, 253-64.

5 Robert E. Gallman, "Commodity Output, 1839-1899", in Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century, NBER, Studies in Income and Wealth (Princeton, 1960), vol. 24, Table 11; and also see North, n. 3, pp. 205-6.

6 Louis M. Hacker, Major Documents in American Economic History (New Delhi, 1961), vol. I, pp. 71-7.

George Rogers Taylor concludes that by 1860, a transformation had occurred in the economy, a transformation that gave the economy a national orientation. The emerging "national economy", was oriented towards the needs of the expansive nation itself. Though foreign trade had grown immensely, with cotton as its prime commodity, domestic commerce in primary and secondary goods soon overshadowed it. This domestic commerce, helped in the growth of great marketing cities in the West, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Chicago.⁷

As the domestic and factory systems of manufacture arose, as transportation grew, the social relations between the economic units and the people also altered. On one side, the merchant capitalist gave way to the industrial capitalist; on the other, most craftsmen, men, women and children from farms, and an increasing number of immigrants, emerged as a body of wage labourers.⁸

It has been pointed out in the first chapter that the transformations in American society had led to the rise of groups and individuals who pointed to the unattractive and exploitative aspects of the changes and demanded reforms. The

7 Taylor, n. 2, pp. 396-8; and North, n. 3, pp. 166-7.

8 Taylor has indicated that by 1860, of the 20 leading cities, New York and Boston had 10 and 11 per cent people engaged in manufacture whereas Philadelphia had 17.5 per cent, Cincinnati 18.3 per cent and Newark 26.2 per cent so engaged. Taylor, n. 2, p. 389.

incipient working class, too, struggled with the dislocations it faced in this era of rapid economic expansion. The principal thrust of their movement was towards higher wages and shorter working hours.

New forms of organization arose among this emerging class of wage-earners. Between 1827 and 1832, there was some political activity centred around the formation of Working Men's Parties. The main areas of this activity were New York and Philadelphia.

The depression of 1837 was a severe setback for this embryonic class to assert itself. Till 1840, the condition of labour continued to deteriorate. The demand for labour, however, continued to increase. The construction of canals, and railroads required an ever-increasing number of unskilled labourers.

The conditions of workers in that era can be seen from the index of real wages and the cost of living constructed by Jurgen Kuczynski. It indicates that between 1841 and 1851, the real wages stayed ahead of the cost of living. Taylor, however, cautions against assuming that such an index alone could give a true picture of the difficulties faced by the working class.

The demand for shorter working hours was an important aspect of labours' struggle. Though several state legislatures supported the measure, it was not by any means, easily granted. As a matter of fact, shortening of labour hours was accompanied

by an intensification of labour in factories.⁹

In the period 1845-1855 some three million immigrants came to the United States. A major proportion of them remained in the Eastern seaboard region and did not penetrate into the country. A large proportion of immigrants were unskilled workers. Kuczynski has commented that the employers in general welcomed the immigrants as factors that would tend to depress wages, act as strike-breakers and defuse the growing threat of organized action.¹⁰

The problems of the workers were accentuated by the business fluctuations. Thus, the panic of 1857 put 200,000 workers out of jobs, which was about 6 per cent of the total population. Unemployed working men held big demonstrations in New York and Philadelphia demanding relief.¹¹

Among workers an aroused sense of class consciousness, and the usefulness of action to achieve objectives, did not find a significant organized expression at this stage. There were some elements from the middle class who often took up the problem of urban workers as well.

9 Jurgén Kuczynski, A Short History of Labour Conditions under Industrial Capitalism (London, 1943), vol. II, pp. 49-52; Taylor, n. 2, p. 295. Kuczynski has calculated that productivity increased by 100 per cent between 1834 and 1858. See p. 58.

10 North, n. 3, Table R-VIII, p. 245; and Kuczynski, n. 9, pp. 62-3.

11 Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States: From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor (New York, 1972), pp. 237-40. also see Taylor, n. 2, pp. 299-300.

Utopian reformers attempted, unsuccessfully, to provide experimental forms of economic organizations to help the workers. Agrarian reformers, led by George Henry Evans, supported by several influential politicians, and journalists such as Horace Greeley, sought to project westward migration into newly opened lands as a source of escape from "wage-slavery." Abolitionists and subsequently vote seeking politicians, sought to convince Northern working men that their struggle for better conditions was linked up with the struggle against Negro slavery and extension of slavery into the Territories.¹²

The Kansas-Nebraska Act brought forward workers, in significant numbers, participating in the agitation against slavery. German-American labour groups were particularly active in this regard. Joseph Wedemeyer, an early American Marxist was also active in propagating the view that free labour could not achieve its goals without the abolition of Negro slavery.¹³

In the election of 1856, the young Republican Party wooed Northern labour assiduously. Their action was in conformity with their aims--the ending of the extension of slavery, Federal aid for internal improvements, homestead legislation and the preservation of civil and political liberty. These were the aims, essentially those of a capitalist class, but given the context of the times, of the workers as well.

12 Herman Schluter, Lincoln, Labor and Slavery: A Chapter from the Social History of America (New York, 1965), edn. 2, pp. 34-74; and Philip S. Foner, n. 11, pp. 266-76.

13 Philip S. Foner, n. 11, p. 279.

In 1860 the Party and its nominee, Abraham Lincoln, projected a similar image, and in the heightened tension of that year, many workers were willing to respond positively. Neither the Party, nor the nominee, felt called upon to offer any comprehensive programme for the amelioration of the problems of working men in terms of wages, hours of labour, organization, and equitable sharing in the fruits of economic growth.¹⁴

The Republican candidate was bitterly opposed by some Northern capitalist interests. It must be remembered that the largest industry in the North was the cotton textile industry in New England and together with clothing manufacture in New York, was directly linked to the cotton of the South. Besides, New York was the chief cotton market--a centre for brokerage and shipping in the cotton trade.¹⁵

On the eve of the 1860 Presidential elections in New York, circulars were sent by clothing manufacturers calling on employees to vote against the Republicans, warning the workers of the disastrous consequences of voting Republican. In general in the election, Irish workers voted Democrat, but on the balance

14 Bernard Mandel, Labor: Free and Slave (New York, 1955), p. 163; Philip S. Foner, n. 11, pp. 288-90; and Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York, 1970), p. 59.

15 Taylor, n. 2, pp. 126-7, 180, 196. See Philip S. Foner, "Business and Slavery", in Edwin C. Rozwence, ed., Slavery as a Cause of the Civil War (Boston, 1949).

a majority of the workers, particularly the German Americans voted the Republican ticket. Mandel notes that in most Northern cities labour leaders actively campaigned for Lincoln. 16

Abraham Lincoln was a vigorous protagonist of the idea of "free labor". An orthodox Whig till 1855, he championed the cause of internal improvements, higher tariffs, a National Bank, and a more vigorous public land policy. As a person who had struggled from the status of labourer to that of President-elect, he firmly believed social mobility was a reality in the Northern society and that the idea of "free labor" was vital to America's growth and prosperity.

That Lincoln's sentiments towards the working people were friendly and favourable is quite evident. But what is not so evident is whether he had any firm convictions on action to be taken to assure the working man his rightful share in the political and economic spheres. Lincoln was wont to voice generalizations indicating his goodwill but showed little willingness to follow through with concrete action. As early as the 1830s he had asserted that the "privileges of government ¹⁷ should go to those who assist ¹⁷ in bearing its burthens."

But he did not believe that this should be sought to be achieved by labour by means of class-conflict. He had argued

16 Mandel, n. 14, pp. 165-6, 170-3; and Philip S. Foner, n. 11, pp. 293-6.

17 Collected Works, vol. I, p. 48.

in 1859 that the desirable objective was the establishment of a "rightful relationship" between those "who accumulate capital" and those who "labor" for the former. The key to his thinking about the former group is contained in the same speech. He indicated that those who accumulated capital did so because they were "industrious and sober."¹⁸

Lincoln viewed Northern society as one where the unique gifts of "free labor" operated to the "advancement -- improvement in condition ... of a society of equals." In such a society, "some ... would get wealthy." Lincoln made it clear that he did not believe "in a law to prevent a man from getting rich."

America did not need any class war as it offered enough opportunity "to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with every body else."¹⁹

This is, of course, the familiar language of a man of humble origins who has achieved personal success and who believes that equality of opportunity was a reality. The implications of the argument was that if a person was not able to "make it", the fault probably rested largely, if not wholly, on him. That is exactly what Abraham Lincoln said:

If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of

18 Ibid., vol. III, p. 459, 469.

19 Ibid., vol. III, p. 462; and vol. IV, p. 24. Emphasis added.

either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune. (20)

Should a working man seek to overcome his "singular misfortune" by efforts to combine with others and undertake organized action? While Republicans like Lincoln upheld the right to strike, they only meant that labourers could leave their jobs and find work elsewhere rather than close down factories to pressurize employers.²¹

The belief in the essential harmony of interests between labour and capital precluded any sympathy for self-conscious working class action. Eric Foner observes that, given the belief that individuals were responsible for their economic shortcomings and not society, the Republicans, "for all their glorification of Northern labor, looked down upon those who labored for wages all their lives."²² Even a writer like Eric Foner hesitates to mention the Emancipator by name and chooses to ascribe such an attitude to "the Republicans." Was Lincoln's own attitude any different?

The great quality of free labour, he said, was "the inspiration of hope ... upon human exertion." But what he was willing to do if hopes remained unfulfilled and exertions

20 Ibid., vol. III, p. 479.

21 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 24.

22 Eric Foner, n. 14, p. 23.

proved unavailing was not made clear.

The Morrill Tariff and its successive amendments during the war years put up tariff schedules up to 47 per cent at an average on dutiable commodities by 1864. It was a great boon to the capitalist class. The Homestead Act benefited numerous farmers, but as Paul Wallace Gates and Fred A. Shannon have shown the Act spurred monopolization and speculation in public lands and involved, "give away" of enormous lands to railroads in cynical disregard for the "idealistic expressions constantly voiced concerning the principle." Shannon depreciated the value of the Act as a "safety value" for Northern labour. In an earlier chapter fraud in respect to Indian lands has been discussed.²³

To finance the Civil War, the Lincoln Administration resorted to several expedients. The issue of "green-backs" or paper currency was a new innovation. Another expedient was the mass selling of war bonds. This was taken up by Jay Cooke,

23

Paul Wallace Gates, "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System," and Fred A. Shannon, "The Homestead Act and the Labor Surplus," American Historical Review (Washington, D.C.), vol. XLI, July 1936, pp. 652-81 and pp. 637-51 respectively. Gates has pointed out that between 1862 and 1871, 128 million acres of land were given to the railroads, p. 657. It was calculated that one-tenth of the total area of United States, was given to the railroads and three-tenths was restricted for settlement due to Government policy towards railroad land grants.

a Philadelphia banker, whose success in selling these bonds was phenomenal. His 1/2 per cent commission brought him an immense fortune. Similarly, new taxes were levied, and over the years a tax-structure was created which as Leonard P. Curry points out, proved to be "ideally adapted for the 'Gilded Age'." The taxes were often evaded and unconspicuously passed on to the consumer.²⁴ They, too, weighed heavily on the wage-earners.

The huge war expenditure and the heavy scale of financial dealings provided immense scope for corruption. Millions of dollars, for example, were made by selling uniforms made of "shoddy", a textile processed from refuse and sweepings which usually disintegrated on the backs of soldiers when it rained. Broken down horses were sold to the army, freight rates were hiked up by railroads and the resources of the nation "were generally regarded as the exclusive property of the shrewd, the clever, and the quick."

Enterprising capitalists and businessmen reaped huge profits. Thus, the New England wool industry paid dividends of 10 to 40 per cent during the war years. The Illinois Central, of which the President had once been an attorney, sold off,

24 Leonard P. Curry, Blueprint for Modern America: Non-Military Legislation of the First Civil War Congress (Nashville, 1968), p. 180; also see Edward C. Kirkland, Industry Comes of Age Business, Labor and Public Policy, 1860-1897 (New York, 1961), pp. 21-4.

during the war, 800,000 acres out of its land grant of 2,600,000 acres. The Du Pont family earned enormous profit from manufacturing gun powder for the government.

Thus, "land developers" such as Marshall Field made an enormous fortune out of his dry-goods business forcing Government and the people to pay exorbitant prices for poor material. As Gustavus Myers in his work History of Great American Fortunes has pointed out that certain capitalists "unloaded upon the Government, at ten times the cost of manufacture, quantities of munitions of war... [so] worthless that they often had to be thrown away after their purchase." He points out to the swindling of the Federal Government by Cornelius Vanderbilt in the famous Banks expedition episode. Here, Vanderbilt chartered an apparently useless ship to the Government for use in a military expedition to New Orleans. There was, of course, no action taken by the Lincoln Administration. Vanderbilt went on to build an enormous fortune.

Similarly Marcellus Hartley along with J. P. Morgan were involved in the case of the defective Hall's carbines supplied to the army. Both went on to make huge fortunes without loss of liberty or fame. These were but a few of the

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Thomas H. O'Connor, The Disunited States: The Era of Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1972), p. 189. See also Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, 1861-1864, vol. 2, pp. 143-4; and John Chamberlaine, The Enterprising Americans: A Business History of the United States (New York, 1963), pp. 123-7.

"Robber Barons" who manipulated securities, frauded investment funds, and reaped fortunes during the Civil War.²⁶

The corruption engendered by war expenditure emanated to a large degree from the War Department under Simon Cameron.²⁷

Lincoln moved with no great vigour in combating corruption.

War-time profiteering bred a spirit of extravagance and frivolity in the North in contrast to the growing battlefield casualties and the difficulties of the working classes. "This", declared the New York Herald, "is the age of shoddy... [the] shoddy

26 Gustavus Myers, History of Great American Fortunes (New York, 1936), pp. 291, 294-6 and 402-3.

27 The Assistant Secretary under him, Thomas A. Scott was, though, without pay, the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, a Corporation involved in the transporting troops and supplies.

The extent of misappropriation during the war years, caused a comment from Henry C. Dawes, Chairman of the House Committee on Government Contracts, that, "...somebody has plundered the public treasury in a single year as much as the entire yearly expenditure of the government...." Lincoln was strangely loth to move against Cameron despite heavy pressure from Thaddeus Stevens and the Radicals. In December 1861, the Committee published a report containing enough revelations of fraudulent operations and "errors in judgement" on the part of Cameron and Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles. Lincoln was compelled to act, he removed Cameron, appointing him Minister to Russia, but Welles stayed on.

brokers in Wall Street... [the] shoddy contractors...

[and] shoddy businessmen." ²⁸ Increased profits and lavish spending pushed up consumer prices. Milk sold at 1½ cents a quart in 1861, was sold at 10 cents a quart in 1864. Butter at 4 cents a pound in 1861 was 25 cents a pound in November 1864. Jurgen Kuczynski has calculated that during this period, the cost of living increased by about 80 per cent and real wages declined by 25 per cent. Wholesale prices of manufac-²⁹ tured goods rose to a high point of 125 cents in 1864.

The great crusade against Confederacy thus became a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight." Working class families faced the problem from the absence and death of their bread-winners. While the soldiers and workers received pay in "green-backs" that fluctuated wildly, government bond holders were guaranteed payment in 100-cent dollars. The Lincoln Administration did nothing to control prices. Growing dissatisfaction with conditions led to strikes. Though the war was on, coal miners in Pennsylvania, dry goods clerks in New York City, shop-girls in Boston and newspaper workers engaged in strikes against management policies. ³⁰

28 George W. Smith and Charles Judah, Life in the North During the Civil War: A Source History (Albuquerque, N. M., 1966), pp. 232-3; and Philip S. Foner, n. 11, p. 326.

29 See Kuczynski, n. 9, p. 81; and Philip S. Foner, n. 11, p. 326.

30 Philip S. Foner, n. 11, pp. 327-8; and Mandel, n. 14, p. 190.

Profits were further raised by the Contract Labor Law signed by the President on 4 July 1864. This legalized contracts to bring cheap labour to America and assured employers that these workers would not be drafted for the war. The American Emigrant Company became an agent for its operation in Europe. By this law, thousands of emigrants were reduced to the status of indentured servants and were used frequently as strike-breakers.

Some of the strikes were broken with the help of the army. Martial Law was used to crush a strike by tailors, and other by machinists and blacksmiths in St. Louis in April 1864. William Sylvis, a prominent labour leader later to become the President of the National Labor Union, complained that government machinery was used to put down the Miners Association in the Eastern coal regions and the moulders in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.³¹

Another sore point with the working men was the blatantly unfair draft law which permitted the wealthy to gain exemption by paying a fee of \$300. Randall estimates that some 86,000 people escaped service by using this clause. The President also issued a proclamation revoking the writ of habeas corpus to enforce this law. The harshness of this law on the working class was used by secret Confederate sympathizers to

31 Hacker, n. 6, pp. 112-13; Philip S. Foner, n. 11, p. 327; and Schluter, n. 12, pp. 215-20.

whip up the riot that broke out in New York against the enforcement of the draft in 1863.³²

Lincoln had, in 1860, asserted labour's right to strike as evidence of the superiority of Northern institutions over Southern slave society. Carl Sandburg notes that the shipyard strike in Brooklyn was, perhaps, the only one in which Lincoln used his influence as President to intervene and bring about a settlement. Philip Foner attributes to Lincoln an order forbidding Federal Government servants to intervene in the "legitimate demands of labor". Sandburg, however, is more cautious and notes that the story about the order has become "a tradition of the labor movement." The Collected Works contains no such order issued by Lincoln.³³

It was fortunate, that despite the travail of labour in 1863-1864, it remained intensely loyal to the Union. Mandel has remarked that throughout the war, the number of strikes was comparatively small, despite the immense dislocations caused by the war-time economy, the working class was loyal to the

32. J. G. Randall, Lincoln the President: Springfield to Gettysberg (New York, 1945), pp. 293-302; Collected Works, vol. V, pp. 437-7; and Schluter, n. 12, pp. 202-10.

33. Collected Works, vol. IV, p. 24; Sandburg, n. 25, pp. 483-4; and Philip S. Foner, n. 11, p. 332. He was prompted to do so in the interests of the war effort; a letter of 21 December 1863 to Secretary of War Stanton indicates this.

Union and by and large supported the President. It can even be said that the workers had great faith in their President. Thus, even when facing economic difficulties, attacks by employers, and unfriendly legislation enacted against "unlawful Interference with Employers and Employees" in New York, Massachusetts and other states, the workers believed that the President was on their side, and would help them out.

The seamstresses of Cincinnati addressed a memorial to Lincoln on 20 February 1865, drawing his attention to the fact that the "the "...widows, sisters and friends [of soldiers]... anxious to do the work required by the Government... at the prices paid by the Government... [found themselves] unable to sustain life for the price offered by contractors..." The memorial went on to state that the contractors were making 40 to 50 per cent profit on their work. The seamstresses requested the Government to offer them the work directly, bypassing the profiteering contractors. There is no evidence that Lincoln took any action on this petition or addressed himself to the problem or the solution that it presented. A perusal of Lincoln's Annual Messages to Congress of December 1863 and 1864, shows that he completely ignored the subject of the welfare of the working people.

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Philip S. Foner, n. 11, pp. 331-3; Schluter, n. 12, pp. 211-13; John Rogers Commons, ed., Documentary History of American Industrial Society (Cleveland, 1909-11), vol. 9, pp. 72-3; and Collected Works, vol. V, p. 162; vol. VI, p. 416.

The working people of the Union gave Lincoln massive support. Working people in other countries too extended their sympathy to the cause he led. The International Workingmen's Association in London, sent him a laudatory address on his re-election in 1864. The letter indicated, more than anything, the immense faith that labour, even European, reposed on him. Lincoln would, they believed, "lead the country... [for a] reconstruction of a social world." Among the signatories of the letter was Karl Marx.

Charles Francis Adams, the American Ambassador, relayed the reply from Lincoln, as reserved in tone, as the address had been fervent. In Britain, the sympathy of the working people was of vital importance to Lincoln. That it was forthcoming through the travail that British labour was undergoing due to the Union's cotton blockade, was remarkable. Besides, the possibility of intervention by supporters of the Confederacy in Britain was a real one. It was in order to hold and reinforce such support that Lincoln continued to make laudatory remarks concerning labour. Since his attitude was benevolent and not anti-labour, his statements appeared to be warm and sincere, at any rate were so regarded by labour.

In a letter to the New York Working Men's Democratic Republican Association, accepting its honorary membership, on

35

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Civil War in the United States Richard Enmale, ed., (London, n.d.), pp. 279-81.

21 March 1864 Lincoln quoted parts of his first Annual Message of 3 December 1861, declaring: "...labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration....", decrying the effort to place capital above labour. He wrote: "The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations...."

This statement is often quoted as evidence of Lincoln's advocacy of the unity of the working classes. But the context in which it was made, namely the imperative of promoting working class support internally and externally for the Union, must be borne in mind. Lincoln's plea for working class unity rested on far different premises from Marx who said: "Workers of the world unite." Abraham Lincoln made clear the foundations of his own faith--the necessity of safeguarding the institution of property, property being the just reward of labour, and the undesirability of class-conflicts. Wrote Lincoln:

Nor should this lead to a war upon property, or owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor--property is desirable--that some should be rich, shows that others may become rich... Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another but let him labor diligently and build one for himself that his own shall be safe from violence when built. (36)

It may be argued that Lincoln was not talking of labour and capital in the specific sense that we view them now or, for

that matter, in the sense that the bulk of the American workers with low level of class consciousness viewed them even then. He was talking for the petit bourgeoisie and the class of small independent farmers and artisans whose progress he had consciously avowed all his life and whose support formed, at that time, the power base of the Republican Party.

But if we concede this argument, it will be equally valid to question the propriety of the use that is made by eulogists of Lincoln to depict parts of the statements where he lauds the working people as "proof" of Lincoln's elevated commitment to labour and working class unity. In any event, there can be no doubt concerning his basic philosophy of commitment to the capitalist system, private property and opposition to working class action. In that philosophical framework, Lincoln's attitude to the working class was never malevolent. Indeed it was benevolent insofar as his attitudes and pronouncements. But in terms of concrete action to mitigate the evils of wage slavery and to open the avenues to an equitable share in economic progress to the workers, his record can only be regarded as not very significant.

Behind Lincoln's ideas lay a conservative view of society. For Lincoln and his party, the social order of the North in their time was one from which a just and equal human society could emerge. The economic factors operating—the expansion of agriculture, industry, transportation and the

resultant relative social mobility would, they believed, make for greater economic growth and lead to a greater equality in the distribution of wealth.

Lincoln did not defend economic privilege. But for him, except for a miniscule group in the North, privilege and aristocracy lay in the Southern slavocracy. He chose to project the cult of the self-made man and an economic order which was, within a decade, to lead to the "Gilded Age."

Given its weakness, Northern labour was compelled to accept the rhetoric of the Republicans, a rhetoric so brilliantly voiced by Lincoln himself. Unable to match the strength of the new class and its degree of political sophistication, Northern labour could not compel attention of its society on the primary question posed by it—the contradictions between the rising industrial capital and the embryonic working class.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

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In the pantheon of American heroes Abraham Lincoln occupies an honoured position. His leadership in a war which, among other things, involved a struggle against those who proclaimed faith in the institution of human slavery, and his success in preserving the Union, and the circumstances of his death in the hour of victory have all contributed to the emergence of Lincoln's image as an outstanding moral force. The period which witnessed his rise in American politics culminating in his accession to the Presidency represented an era in American history when the call for reform of various abuses in American society was passionately articulated by several high-minded and courageous individuals. The most intense fervour came to be generated against the most grievous problem in American society, namely, black slavery. The present dissertation represents a modest preliminary exercise in examining the evolution of Lincoln's thought and the policies that he pursued as President in respect of three issues--slavery in the United States, the plight of the Indians, and the problems of the working people at the bottom of the economic ladder. These were issues to which some of the finest minds in America of that period had addressed themselves. They had a vision of America purged of ghastly social abuses and moving vigorously in the direction of making a just and humane society a reality. It is submitted by the present writer that the record of Abraham

Lincoln should appropriately be examined in that context. Many American commentators while paying deserved praise to certain exemplary qualities of Lincoln and certain policies that he successfully pursued, have tended to gloss over his record on the three issues referred to.

In the first chapter the transformations that were occurring in various aspects of American life in the middle of the nineteenth century have been outlined. An attempt was made to bring out the impact of the reform movement in American life. It was in this context that the struggle of the abolitionists, who, as it was shown, came to signify the vanguard of the reformers, was studied.

Critical analysis of the evolution of Lincoln's views on slavery, undertaken in Chapter II, gives rise to some doubts on whether the moral greatness implied in his title--the Emancipator--is entirely justified. His views on Negro slavery and its solution maintained a remarkable consistency through his career in the Illinois Legislature, Congress, and the Presidency. It is clear that he gave practical if not verbal support to maintaining slavery where it existed prior to 1860. Similarly, he never spoke out against the "Jim Crow" laws in his own home state of Illinois. His support for the Fugitive Slave Law, continued unchanged even though it was not warranted by the exigencies of electoral politics in Illinois after 1850.

Lincoln's policy on the issue of slavery after he

became President are examined in Chapter III. His sustained opposition initially, to the enlistment of black troops, to the use of contraband and to the emancipation of slaves in areas that had come under the occupation of Federal troops provide a commentary to his halting approach to the eradication of the "peculiar institution," even after the crusade had been in progress for some time. The Emancipation Proclamation was itself a war measure whose application was restricted to slavery in areas under Confederate control. Many American scholars do, of course, mention these aspects in passing but neglect to ask the question whether this course as President did not represent logical outgrowth of conservative views on slavery that he had all along held.

Lincoln's sustained advocacy of deportation of Blacks from America, his refusal to accept them as an integral part of American society with full civil and political rights, seriously damaged in the opinion of this writer, the prospect of major moves towards a solution to the race problem in America for the next 100 years. Had the martyred President formulated a vigorous programme of action in his life-time, he would have left behind a legacy that might have served his country well. The exigencies of "practical politics" of which he was a consummate practitioner were, in the decades after the Civil War, to blunt the edge of the moral fervour that the abolitionists had so energetically sought to arouse. The revo-

lutionary momentum of the reform impulse came to be deflected, for which Lincoln should bear some responsibility for what he failed to do.

In outlining the Indian policy of the Lincoln Administration in Chapter IV, the present writer once again came up against a situation where Lincoln's thought and actions were no different from those of any ordinary white settler on the frontier. While it is true that Lincoln's policy did not differ from those of previous or subsequent Administrations, certain steps taken by the Lincoln Administration, e.g., the Pacific Railroad Act and the Homestead Act, were of greater significance in imposing extraordinary suffering and hardship to the Indians. The moral spark is not very visible in his record.

When the clamour of the settlers was in favour of "Indian removal," President Lincoln was not disposed to look too closely into treaties. Extinguishment of the Indian rights appeared to be regarded by him as natural, normal, and inevitable. If there was a prospect of valuable mineral resources being available in an area, he had no qualms over action to "extinguish" the rights of Indians and move them away physically. If the Indians misbehaved he was ready to visit exemplary punishment on them.

In analyzing Lincoln's attitude towards the Negroes and the American Indians the present writer would agree with Richard Hofstadter's evaluation that "...so far as the Negro

was concerned, Lincoln could not escape the moral insensitivity that is characteristic of the average white American.¹ The question here is, should one go about calling "the average white American" a great moral figure?

Professor James G. Randall has noted with regard to Lincoln's economic thought that the "liberal credo" was its key. By this Professor Randall explains that Lincoln's views did not "begin and end" with laissez faire,² but took within its scope, the policy of public welfare. In this context Lincoln's attitude to the working people at the bottom of the economic pyramid needs to be examined. The present writer is unable to agree with Randall's contention.

The analysis of Lincoln's precepts and policies reveal that Lincoln, the successful railroad attorney and politician espoused the views of Hamilton while emphasizing the Jeffersonian rhetoric.

Lincoln's attitude towards the working-class indicates his essentially conservative view of society. Writers have made much of Lincoln's friendliness towards labour. The present writer was able to find enough rhetoric but not much substance to this friendliness. He was no labour-baiter and his personal instincts were benevolent. But in terms of concrete action the

1 Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York, 1961), p. 116n.

2 James G. Randall, Lincoln the Liberal Statesman (New York, 1947), pp. 180-2.

record is not very impressive, especially when compared to the benefits his policies conferred to business interests, land speculators and railroad promoters. He was not a tool in the hands of vested interests. But he did not employ his undoubted political talent and his capacity for leadership to formulating and pushing for a programme of action having for its objective the promotion of the interests of the underdog.

In viewing Lincoln's response to the issues outlined above, the present writer has come to the conclusion that Lincoln was a somewhat limited man even for his times. Emancipation of slavery had already been undertaken by the British ruling class a generation before, in 1833. Even the Czar was able to issue his edict of emancipation in 1861. Thus, it is clear that Lincoln, viewed in a broader perspective, is seen more as a pragmatic improviser with his own vision of a reformed and humane American society. His response, whether to slavery or to the Indians, or towards the incipient class contradictions between capital and labour, appear to have been a step or two behind the progressive thought of the times. His real title to greatness rests on his success in preserving the Union. In his life-time he himself had frankly acknowledged that the preservation of the Union was his overriding objective.

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